MIDSTREAM

Will Levington Comfort

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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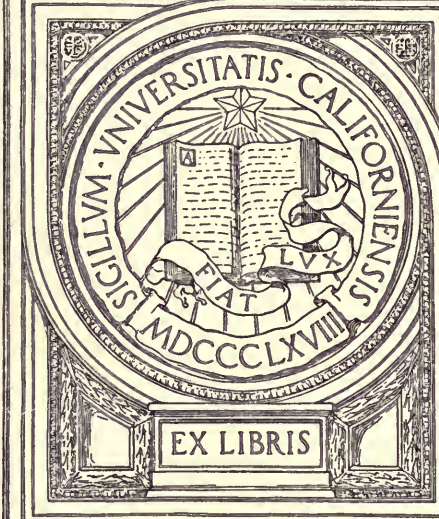

Midstream

A Chronicle at Halfway

BY

WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT

AUTHOR OF "DOWN AMONG MEN," "FATE KNOCKS AT THE DOOR," "ROUTLEDGE RIDES ALONE," ETC.

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TO
THE YELLOW LAMP

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FOREWORD

In every man's heart there is a story. This is mine. I do not tell it as a writer, but as a man who has found his work.

There is not a wail in this book. I am thirty-five years old—a well and work-glad man. Everything that is past was right *for me*, and everything to come is right. As for most of the evils which I make important with the good, I have no care now, other than to preserve the lessons of them, the sympathy and understanding for others which they alone teach. If I should forget these lessons, miseries were suffered in vain. Indeed the evil days would be challenged to come again.

So, after this telling, all concern ends with the child so passionate for sensation, and with the youth and younger man in whom you will see so ripened a devil. If a man lives a grade higher life than he lived last year, he is a different man. He could not have risen unless the price were paid; be very sure of that.

I show you a certain progress of life in the

child and boy and man known as Comfort. I know him best of all men. I would not call him another name in this, his story,—no artificial literary form this time between you and me.

Here is a test-tube, a crucible, for certain important experiments. It shall break and the poisons compounded in it shall pass, but the final result shall pass only when proven a failure. I can understand an aversion on the part of many for this analysis of the solution of a man, for I have had that, too. In my youth I approached the candid and simple with shame and scorn, but I have lived to approach them with gratefulness and delight. There is nothing wrong in the truth.

We are meeting life every day. Much of life is designed to make us predatory; yet that is failure. You will see why I say so. The joy of this book is to show how values came to me, in spite of evil beginnings, and that the way is no secret.

A man's heart circle is very large, if he is normal, and can tell his own true tale. I write as one might talk to friends in his study—not that I am good—far from that. But the light is clearer about me, the days brighter. There are descents and hollows in my life now, but the deepest hollows of to-day are a little higher above the level of the sea than those of yesterday. When I have finished with this story I shall lis-

ten again. I say it with gladness, there is not anywhere the old shadow nor vagueness of light. . . . Finally I write now at half-way, while I can remember, and before the glows and hallowings of age come to charm the far past into a fairyland.

WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT.

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MIDSTREAM

1

HOUSE

IN a brick house, Lincoln Avenue, Detroit, I "came to." I was not born in that house nor city, but took up my record there. The house seemed old and large and austere to me then, and now—for it is still a productive property.

The house was never empty; my grandmother was always at home. She sat facing the side door in the dining-room, a south window at her left. The front door of the house was seldom used. If a stranger rang that bell more than once, my grandmother would rise to go, but she was very lame. It took her so long to reach the door, that the stranger seldom remained. Those who knew us came to the side door, and when my grandmother saw them through the glass, she would call, "Come in."

I passed the days in that dining-room with her. I remember especially the winters, though there were several years of this life. There were the side door, the cellar door, the hall door, the

bedroom door, and the kitchen door—all from this dining-room, and one south window facing a vacant lot. My mother was away teaching school all day; my grandfather was away preaching for weeks at a time; the idea of father did not penetrate the room, until long afterward I began to go abroad to the houses of the other boys. I do not know what we did all day. . . . Some one across the street died, and afterward "their" rocking-horse was sent across for me. I have never seen so fine a rocking-horse since. There was something terrible about it being mine. I could not ride it for a long time, because my grandmother was nervous.

She was intensely good to me, yet in that dining-room I drew the sense of my inferiority that was very real. The strong ingredient of my childhood seemed to be that of shame. I came to be ashamed of the house, of our food, of my grandmother's nerves. More than all, I was ashamed of myself, and very easily put out by others. I remember that the houses of other boys looked kingly.

The father idea appeared. I must have made inquiries—but to no result. One day, the mother of a boy I was playing with asked me about my father. I was flushed and embarrassed. From something she said, I realised, alone afterward, that she knew more about it than I did. The shame increased.

There was, beside the rocking-horse, a book of animal pictures and a book of birds. These were very wonderful. I look at them now with burning. It is just that. I would not like those days again. . . . I would take a little pail and put a lunch in it, and ride away to hunt the animals in the book. There was a picture of Livingston struck down by a lion, which was wont to appear again after my mother took me upstairs to bed. The book of pictures was taken away, but not for long. I never fell asleep at once. My mother would make several attempts to leave me, before I was really asleep. She had to go downstairs and "correct her papers." There was no fire in the upper rooms.

Time came when the dining-room was not enough, but I knew the upstairs only as belonging to the nights. The hall, however, was long and dim, a great hunting and exploring ground, but my grandmother kept calling. Her sense of what a little boy might be up to, prevailed upon me very strongly. It may be that the first ideas of concealment, perversion and untruth, stimulated by my own tendencies, reached me psychically from her suspicions. I do not say this as a truth; I love the old lady's memory. But I know that one of the world's everlasting mysteries is the point of view of a child, and that his point of view is determined as much by influences as by words.

In a niche in the wall, half up the stairway was a helmetted knight, made of some chalky composition and gilded. He was large as I, at the time, but had everything that goes with men. I was considerably afraid of him, sometimes regarding him from a lower stair. Above the old-fashioned double-doors of the main entrance of the house was a pane of coloured glass; and in the afternoons the sunlight came through, tinted and very disturbing. I have seen the same tinge since in coming storms at sea.

To the right of the hall were the front and back parlours. There was something pale and pent about the former as I remember, more foreign than Asia was afterward. The back parlour had a huge case of books and an upright stove, only used when my grandfather was at home, and made a winter study of it. In the summertime he worked upstairs, writing, writing—his hand crippled from writing.

This was John Levington, my mother's father. An Irish peasant boy, a British soldier, a Wesleyan Methodist preacher in America—always writing, always fighting. A grand rugged man as I see him now, with something of the prophet about him. His son Will appeared occasionally at our house. This was the love of my heart, and the sorrow of his father's. Will's sister, my aunt, came once or twice a week and did much

for me. These two were very great and human.

I went to school at five, but it seems before that I could read. I have heard others explain it in the same way. There was a time when I couldn't read, and another that I could. The steps are lost. The first time I ever felt the lift of a book was from Grimm, and the story was *The Foster Brother.* A boy down the street, somewhat older, told me one or two of the stories, and lent me the book. He had come over in the evening for a few minutes, and sat at the dining-room table, looking at my animal pictures. I was in a torture of shame at the bleak appearance of the room, and at my grandmother's words and nerves—in great relief when he was gone.

It was hard for me to understand how he could loan me the book so readily. It seemed too much for him to do.

He had asked me to read first *The Foster Brother.* His re-telling of some of the stories had not interested me greatly. Through him I saw their unreality.

The next day, alone in the back parlour, sitting on a hassock, the thing ceased suddenly to be laborious print, and I was away with the tale. This was one of the greatest of life experiences; no doubt in my mind then that I was wicked, in such a love and joy. My grandmother was call-

ing. It was like a warning bell from the coast —but I was carried out to sea. The fury of pleasure was so intense, that I was ready to fight for it. I was proud to acknowledge my slavery, vowed that I would circumvent any outside resistance to gratify the passion.

2

STREET

FIRST the house, then the street; each is wonderfully prepared for the child's receptivity. . . . I rode through the old avenue recently. It was with haste and gloom and strange tension. From almost every house I had seen the dead carried forth. It was not death, as I see it now—those long ago forms. It was the death that meant the ever-end of men walking up and down. The crepe white and black, the hush, the coffin brought down from the high steps; signs that often preceded the white crepes—blue of diphtheria, red of scarlet-fever—and the memories that grew dimmer and dimmer and farther apart.

I had looked through the glass darkly. Many detached matters of incomprehensible conduct to the child and the boy were gathered now into the meaning of a single human weakness—this one weakness explaining all the sheaf of misery. I walked my horse, past ours and the house op-

posite. A little farther up was an old darkened side porch that I knew. A tragic-faced old woman was sweeping hopelessly now, as if condemned to an eternal punishment of sweeping. I remembered a night of summer—I, a little child, called to that porch, by one who was known as "the prettiest girl in the city." She lay in a hammock and whispered to me and held me very close. I don't know what she said; I never did, but it was sweet and mysterious to me—that while of moonlit early evening, and my mother calling at last from our door. There was a purring kitten in the hammock from time to time. She was married soon afterward, to a devil who kicked her face in, teeth and all. He was shot in a barroom brawl and died lingeringly. I used to like the scent of him, as he walked up the street in the early evenings, but he never spoke to me as other men did. . . . And just now, walking slowly up the street (it is like a fiction effect), I saw a tall thin creature, as old apparently as her mother who swept the steps, her features altered and shocking—the same who had pressed me close to her that long ago and happy night.

The street, houses of playmates, houses of mystery, grocery, drug-store and the shop of the butcher; the different sunlight, and the rains that have never seemed quite the same since. I wonder if children are ever cold or hot? There is

not the faintest memory of such a thing from those years. I remember going to the grocery with another boy to purchase brandy for mince pies. There was a dreadful fascination about the very word *brandy;* it was a name that caused our house to tremble like the mention of an ancient curse. The bar was in the rear of the store, but the barrels of wine and liquors were stored in front with the grocery goods. The boy told the dealer what he wanted and gave over the small tin-pail which he had brought. We followed to the brandy-barrel, and as he drew it off in a tiny copper measure, I said, in the strangeness of the spell which was upon me:

"Let me smell it."

The man looked up and obeyed.

"You're Mrs. Comfort's boy, aren't you?" he said.

"Yes."

"Smelling it—won't be enough for you after a while," he remarked.

Over and over again, with fear and shame, these words circled through my mind. The boy did not give any light. It was not a matter that I could explain, for to our house, the very errand would have seemed accursed. Long afterward I realised that the storekeeper knew my history. This incident became another item in the father idea. . . . One Saturday I was in and out of this boy's house several times, forenoon

and afternoon. His mother said to me laughingly at last:

"Why don't you bring your trunk?"

I did not realise the crush of this, until I repeated it to my mother; in fact, had I understood I would not have told. It was very bitter to her. I was not allowed to go there again for a long time. Another time I was waiting for another boy to go to school with him, and was asked into the dining-room. It was bright and large; the dishes were pretty. This boy's mother was one of my secret favourites. From a covered dish the father was helping the family to milk toast. I had doubtless done well enough for breakfast; certainly would not have thought of food except for the extremely attractive appearance of this milk-toast. It seems that I fell into a contemplation of the dish from a discreet distance, behind the boy's chair. His father saw me and asked if I had had my breakfast.

"Yes," I said, "but we didn't have any of that—"

The astonishing thing to recall, years after the shame passed, is that I got none. But he was a very petty and imperfect man, a horse-whipper, and that was a most unhappy house.

I remember the interest with which our church was built; the pews bought; the new pastor chosen; how I watched the gold-leaf hammered on the great letters, *Praise ye the Lord.* I re-

member the sermons, the attentive watching for the close, the study of the rising to the end, the breathless suspense lest this rising inflection of the preacher's should end only one certain discussion, and not the sermon itself. Of course, it all looked to me right, the way it should be. But there was never a time in my self-consciousness when I felt pure enough really to belong. I must have been a perfect animal in the sense of smell. The church is all moving with odours in my memory; the smell of the opened hymn-books and the Sunday-school papers, the smell of carpets and varnished pews, the smell of furs in the days of snow and rain, of Easter lilies—the smell of the infant classes, and the different breaths of the people. I suppose things are better now, but then it all belonged to the church —and from it comes to me still something of death.

3

BODY

I WAS not a question-asker. . . . A boy of one of the houses across was my earliest initiator into the how and what of our making. I was about seven and not large; he was no larger, but three years older. There was a nasty perversion upon all that came to me from and through him. His age was a fierce attraction to me, and he had the face of an innocent.

His was a big brick house like mine, and much was in it—an attic of attractions, lower rooms seldom used, a Polish serving-maid of fifteen or sixteen, as interested as ourselves in sensation. There were a few long summer afternoons in that house.

The serving-maid, as I recall, was not evil; she was merely common, her nature adjusted to low animal vibration. The boy was evil, precociously so. I, too, was precociously evil, but with a difference which I did not know then, but

which life has proved to me—different in the possession of an automatic corrective tendency.

If I should happen upon two small boys and an older girl in the midst of such engagements now, the first shock would contain the sense of their hopelessness. This comes of the readjustments of the years, in the process of which hazy curtains are hung, one after another, between us and the past. The more powerfully we mature, the more concentrated is our gaze ahead; and yet, we must reach in our progress that intensity of wisdom which penetrates the veils of the background with the same power that discerns through the shine, the configuration of the upland. We must know ourselves, and cease lying to ourselves, in order to deal with children, in whom are animals as well as angels.

I knew the deadly poison of those afternoon hours in that old house. At the time I thought the other boy did, too, and must be fighting with himself, even though he made the abandonment possible. I never thought of the Polish girl in the moral way, for she was older, blindly expectant, a destined bearer of bodies, no delicacy nor reservation of the finer human having come to her. . . . I found myself often in a kind of enchantment, yet numbed by the calling forth. Once I ran down through the house to the street, and there finding it *the same*—all still, and summery and sweet, just as I had left it, my house

still standing opposite, I was whirled about and hurried back. I must have thought that nature itself was undergoing some hideous convulsion to parallel mine.

Once, when we three were in the attic, I heard a step below. I had not known how crippling terror could be until that moment. I could not at first move, but heard the step again. It was not on the floor below—farther downstairs. The unthinkable thing in my consciousness was to be caught as one of the three. I felt that discovery as one of the three would not only kill, but alter me in some horrible fashion. With the two whispering to me to come back, I began to let myself down the attic stairs. Whoever it was—I must fly past, and out to the street—if I could not escape without being seen altogether.

The boy's mother was in the lower hall, when I reached the second floor. She was coming upstairs. I ran into the first open door—her bedroom. Behind the door in a niche in the wall was a trunk, and above it, hanging from a rail of hooks, were many skirts and dresses. I climbed upon the trunk and concealed myself among the hangings.

The boy's mother came in. She was singing. Something had pleased her. She thought she was alone in the house. She laughed and hummed and changed her dress. I had liked her from afar. I see now that she had drawn me,

even as a child, because she was pretty and sensuous. At this moment behind her door—I knew her only as the mother, the Nemesis. The ghastly thought was lest she should require some garment from behind the door. I made a covenant with God, that if I were allowed to escape, I should never go back to those two, never another summer afternoon. She finished her change and went downstairs still humming. I followed her forth from a distance—and kept the covenant.

This other boy moved away at no great length of time later. Fully ten years afterward—I was seventeen—I heard that he was in the city. We arranged to meet, I welcoming the thought. It was a startling moment. I was always short, but he seemed the same as when I had left him —little, dry, old in body and brain, cheerful, sickly, obscene.

I remember passion as a little child. Passion is the word. There were moments that I could not speak with it; yet I did not know what I wanted, and shame covered the presence of it. I remember the sense of fear that the skin would burst around my eyes. I wondered in certain moments how other boys could speak and laugh; it seemed to me that they must feel as I did. All these passions are identified inseparably in memory with long summer afternoons; stolen hours in our attic where certain medical books were

stored; the terrific absorption, the trance of it, as it were; the coupling of certain plates with revelations from older boys; the working out of schemes of life from the two—and all with such a sense of shame, that I wonder it was not graven indelibly upon my face. Yet fascination held me to what were evil interpretations for a child's mind; for hours it must have been greater than the shame. However, from a certain book I learned what I had known instinctively (but there was value in this sanction of print), that unspeakable evils fell upon the head of one who gave way to these passions. I went again and again to the attic, fighting with myself every dusty step of that steep climb.

Long summer afternoons—and I remember that other boys took my discoveries, and discoveries of their own, with an equanimity that I could never master. Indeed I could never give way to the studies in the books, without heavy reactions of suffering and humility; and always I would feel in giving way—the deepening of some evil brand upon my face. I prayed.

This, in brief, is what I know about these things now: That the worst elements in my nature were not these passions, but that the best thing in my nature was a certain corrective impulse that gave them battle, and greater battle when I was alone. I know that a strong physical love which brings together a man and woman in

a tumult of desire, even though it may preclude the greatest gifts of mind and spirit on the part of the child, does make for the physical beauty of the child.

I know that routine is deadly; that losing the dream, even from physical desire is deadly; that strong physical love, reverting, after the novelty of possession is past, to a mere magnetism of sex-polarity, is a damnable failure on the part of human beings, and that the eyes of the poor little people who are incident to this low gratification, must look down.

I know that there is a greater than physical love—a love between man and woman so electric and potential, that the physical union is but the lowliest of its three caskets, and that immortals are eager to be born of this beautiful expression.

4

A MAN

THE kitchen was always friendly and homelike; alone so, of our house to me. In the summer there was a vegetable garden in the rear-yard. My mother was different to my eyes from any other being in the world. I can hardly remember seeing her, so deep and strange was my relation with her; and yet she wasn't exactly human, as I understood people to be; she seemed a being out of shadows and mystery, alone, perfect, yet apart from all others. I could not have told her things that I might have told others; and yet I was one with her in a way that made separation acute torture. My love for her had much agony in it—the fear that she would not come from school; the fear that I should wake up in the night and find her gone. I used to ask her every night at tea, "Are you going out to-night?"

She seldom went out; she never failed me; yet with dusk coming on, and her not yet at home—

the anguish is dreadful to remember. I cannot bring words to portray that relation; and I wonder now if I can make others understand how I wanted a man in the house. My grandfather did not exactly supply the need. He was a saint, out of the world, his thoughts turned to God. The men who used to go by our house in the summer eve, smelling of cigars, yet each with their separate odour beside—so that had I been blind, I should have known the figure by scent—these filled me with passionate longing.

My Uncle Will didn't come home regularly; often he came in after I was asleep, and was away too early for me in the morning; yet he was the one my heart turned to. He called me Dad, because, as he explained, I was a "sanctimonious cuss" and the twitch of my tow-hair at the collar behind was exactly like his father's, John Levington. I battled every night to stay up, always a little longer, in the hope of his coming. His step on the porch, or "stoop" as my grandmother used to call it, was like the hail of rescuers. My mother's greeting was invariably restrained; my grandmother regarded him with pained suspicion; I flung myself to his breast. We would go together to the kitchen; he would sit back against the wall, smoking and holding me. He was a giant, of superb health, and there was money in his pockets in those days. The soft sweet flavour of alcohol so invariably about him, was different

from any other because his digestion was perfect. I would have missed it, had it not been there. He used to try my strength roughly, groan under my weight, tell me of his younger days with "Boss" Custer, younger brother of the General (and killed with him by the Indians)—of horses, boats, swimming, ball-games—and *they* would be calling. Sometimes he would answer impatiently, "Let Dad alone, will you?"

Once in the middle of the night, I awakened to hear my grandmother weeping downstairs. My mother and aunt were talking in terrified whispers. Will had been shot. I never knew exactly. . . . The bullet had entered his throat, grazing the big artery. It always hurt him afterward between the shoulder-blades. He had crossed a street from the house of the shooting, and stepped into a bar (the red spring bubbling from his throat, his linen soaked) and ordered a drink.

I was taken to him in the hospital where he lay propped. How strangely I remember his jovial "Hello, Dad"; the big yellow pears that were there; how he made me eat until I could go no further. After that, he had to leave the city.

It must have been a long time before my importuning, and his, prevailed, but at last I was taken to him—a day's journey by train straight north. I had never been away from my

mother before; my grandfather was with me. Toward dusk, we came to the pine "slashings." Inspiringly dreary is the beginning of night in that sand and stump region, in that burned spectre land. The fear arises that the heaven-dimension can not be operative in the midst of such an earthly desolation. Tears did not steal forth; they popped out, hot and plashy. They were not to be hidden, and my grandfather drew me close to him and said again and again:

"We'll soon be there, Willie—and *he'll* be there."

I wouldn't have gone back, but my soul took on forever something of that loneliness from the pine-barrens—the night making haste to cover them. We stepped down in the dark, and I heard his voice and felt his arms. He carried me around in front of the panting engine—across the track in the white glare from the headlight. . . . The crossing to death will be like that, I am sure,—dusk in the barrens, the full dark and confusion—the call, the arms, the mighty light, and the peace of it all.

He had a little store at the edge of the tracks, to supply a lumber outfit at work in the woods behind, and the men of the saw-mill opposite—candy, tobacco and papers. Three transporting days I was there—the wood-stove for the cold nights, the lumbermen coming in and making much of me, life with men that I had wanted so

deeply, my grandfather smiling and forgotten; yet happy to see that I loved his son so well.

Some weeks after I had returned to Detroit, a letter came from Uncle Will stating that a friend of his, needing help, was to call at our house. I watched for days. Everything was forgotten in the watching, a pained anxious vigilance enough to make one ill. One afternoon I walked up the street behind a young man whom I thought must be this friend. With every step the conviction increased, the first sharp doubting overpowered in intense reality formed of hope. I gained on him, and was ready to thrust my hand in his, the instant he turned into our gate.

The stranger passed on, our house like another to him. I choked and went to the cellar to get myself in hand. It seemed one of the things that could never be told. In fact, it was never told until now. I remember the intensity and the shame of it, with a feeling of dismay, because other children must have these tragedies and cannot speak. . . . This was the need of a man—the aching unfulfilment of those years.

Uncle Will lived to make the same furious alliances with my own little children, I laughing and disregarded as my grandfather had been. I had the pleasure of much of him afterward. He would send for me in the deeps of his later drinking. He never married and died hard. As a child I think I would have died for him.

5

ANOTHER MAN

AFTER that first trip, my grandfather loved to take me forth on his preaching journeys. He was used in his latter years by the Methodist conference in Michigan as a sort of arouser of decadent charges. There was too much fight in him for peace and plenty ever to come. He was fighting against slavery when even the North was neutral. His life was attempted, his sanity questioned, and "charge" after "charge" taken from him, until he had come to this.

There was no harangue in him, though he preached a personal God—a God who answers prayer, a God to commune with personally. He preached the mastery of self, the life of service and kindness, the life of production and loving-kindness to others—I can still hear him cry, "How excellent is Thy lovingkindness,"—and every detail of his preaching he lived to the letter.

There was a sweet lyric strain in the man. I remember his reciting a certain metrical version of the Twenty-third Psalm, learned at his

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mother's knee in Ireland. Listening, as a little boy, some startling softening spirit flooded through me, and all about him were men and the slave-women of the farms—resolved into tears. He would preach upon Saint Paul—preach long hours it seemed to me, yet no one left, though many came softly in. I remember the summer mornings, the horses snuffling and clearing their nostrils outside the window, the silences of Sunday abroad in great golden light, the weeping of the women.

Then he would go alone out into the woods at nightfall to pray. He ate no meat, an egg sometimes, but milk and honey and graham bread. He was nearly eighty years old, but the training of sixty years before, in the British army, still kept his shoulders back, his waist like a young woman's and his chest rounded. I can hear him say "Willie," as no one else ever said it. . . . I remember discovering how easy it was to lie to him; and of the shame of lying to such a simple heart, so that it became hard for me. I was doing things then which I could not let him know; experimenting with chewing-tobacco, for instance. He saw a paper of fine-cut in my pocket, and I told him that I bought it so I would have some for the hired men when they asked. This was only partly true, for I loved the smell of tobacco, and the taste of a fibre for a moment.

He did not ascend those country pulpits to

arraign the sins of the people. I have found since that he was a fighter only in the midst of complications, not in the centres of simplicity. From his gentle beginnings, the "spirit" would come to the congregation; and the leaders, among those gathered, would take the meetings out of his hand, and go through the old galvanism of calling sinners to the altar, of confession, experience,—emotions and voices rising—until scenes of excitement were enacted. He would sit with bowed head. I am far from sure that he loved these boisterous fulfilments.

One week-night after church-service, I walked back to the farm-house with him along the country road. It was our last talk together of the real side of the world, which is not so far beyond a child as we are prone to conclude. The stars were out, white mists lay upon the fields, and only the woods were dark. I was somehow in the very glow of things. . . . Just a few nights ago in this study, a friend expressed it perfectly: "It was one of those white nights, when everything is clear to the mind.". . . My grandfather told me how he used to leap from the Irish cliffs into the sea; how he had gathered his belongings in a handkerchief and departed, his stick upon his shoulder, his mother weeping; how poor they were, and how near was God. . . . He had learned "the Greek" alone. He was mighty in the Scriptures, and prayed unceasingly.

I know of no man in all the world worthier to be in the middle distance of one's lineage; yet he grew up on the clay floor of an Irish cabin, and behind him, was unlettered peasantry. . . . As we neared the farm-house, all too soon that night, he looked up at the stars and said:

"Willie, *that's* home. Those are the lights of *our* City. We see them as if from the sea—coming Home."

The following Sunday morning early, I found him praying in the room we occupied. I turned away from the look of his eyes. They were half-open, and he was lost in the concentration of prayer. I wondered if it were not madness to look that way. It wasn't madness, but sanity. It was the look of a pilgrim in a strange country, but not afraid.

I walked on ahead toward the church, a mile away; my grandfather was to drive with the old mother of the farm-house. Ten minutes afterward the rig passed me on the road. I didn't understand. He was always a perfect horseman. The beast was in a high slow lope, but I was too young to know from the reddened eyes, and the bit-chewing, that he meant business. . . . I saw the old woman's mouth. It was open, round, as if an egg was to be produced from it. One rein, my grandfather held close to his breast; the other was well in hand. His face was set. He was speaking to the horse, a long-bodied bay, with a

head like a reptile, notoriously wicked over the country-side.

The strangeness of it all was that I was not excited. There was a hush upon everything, that saintly enchantment of Sunday, the high vividness of an August nine-o'clock. Three farm-boys ahead were excited. They knew; and yet, they had stood aside as I did, to let the runaway pass. They yelled to me what would happen. . . . We saw the carriage suddenly blown forward. The mankiller had straightened out.

The rest of the mile to the church was a matter of seconds; the buggy was whipped along like an umbrella in a cyclone. There was an explosion of dust at the church when the bay turned in. I had an instant profile of the beast stretched out in the run, the buggy careening. The boys called from ahead that the rig had turned over.

They were just lifting the old woman when I reached there. She was covered with dirt and blood; and the sounds that came from her were like a hideous snoring. She lived. My grandfather was upon his feet, asking for help to remove his coat. I remember how slim he looked after the black frock coat was removed, and how white his linen in the sun.

He had been thrown upon the field-stones of the steps of the church, where he was to preach that perfect morning—his body broken from col-

lar-bone to hip on the one side; yet he had stood while they helped him remove his coat from the ruin; and walked with assistance to the parsonage. The second night afterward he died.

6

GULF

IN the sixth or seventh summer, my mother took me to Philadelphia, where we stayed for several weeks with relatives of my grandmother. The journey seemed very long and perilous, on account of the travel-terrors of my mother, whom I reflected like a deep pool. We stopped for a day in New York. There was anguish in the first ride on the elevated rails, and the excursion to Central Park was altogether dismal. In the crowd at the Philadelphia station, the man finally appeared, and there was peace, and a carriage. He was superintendent of the civic institution known then, and possibly now, as "The House of Refuge," a sort of detention for incorrigible boys and girls. His house within the stone-walls, was ancient and grim; the life there stately. The man gave me handfuls of small coins from time to time, a very great deal of money, that made me want things; yet he was very good. The journey, carriage-rides every day, the environment and all

the pictures of it, seem a little out of relation to the rest of my life.

The next summer vacation brought an event. I was considered too young to be prepared for it; knew only that we were going North, and were to spend some weeks on the shores of Lake Michigan. Toward evening, after travelling since early morning, we reached Petoskey. My mother led me by the hand out of the coach; and no sooner did she touch the platform than a man took her in his arms. Astonished and rebellious, I was informed of my father's presence. This visible turning of my mother to some one apart from myself was a shock.

I remember the splendid supper at the big hotel, and how they talked. Next morning, we took boat for our real destination. My father was slow to speak, a kind man, with a rich and eager mind. He took absolutely no part in my management or order. My mother was essence of life to me, the mighty need. I believe she was happy that summer. . . . I remember Lake Michigan, the harbour, fishing interests, the coming of the big sailing craft, cool piney air, the bluffs and the storms. Of all these I was a sort of healthy solution, with no great emotions nor sensations.

That fall, after school was resumed, I was told that my father was coming to live with us. It is almost laughable, my first thought, yet there

is something grim about it,—how I should explain this to the boys of the street.

He came, a dear unobtrusive man and went about his work. From toleration, my grandmother came to sanction him stirringly. There was an oppressive self-consciousness to my comings and goings for a while, but this wore away.

About this time in the attic, (the fascination of the old books and papers there, had only subsided in so far as I was coming to the end of discoveries,) I found a scrap-book which contained a set of newspaper clippings regarding the suicide of a certain Thomas Comfort. Four local papers told the same story in different words. He had been in the drug business with his brother, Silas H. Comfort (my father) and on New Year's morning in 1877, leaving the family below, he went to his room and drank prussic acid. His mother entered shortly afterward, thought him asleep, and drew the covering over him. . . . I pondered the matter until I could see Uncle Will, who by this time had returned from the North, but was not often at the old Lincoln house.

"It was the drink, Dad," he explained. "Your uncle Tom was a fine fellow—a brilliant, droll chap. He broke over that New Year's eve—after keeping straight three months. There was a dear girl waiting for him—but he wouldn't go to her, after falling into the old

ways. . . . Yes, I knew Tom well—we were often together, and great times we had. A rare boy, was Tom. . . . Your father was older. He closed out the drug-store after that."

7

WALT

LINCOLN AVENUE was not without beauty, with its large separate brick houses and fine rows of maple trees. It was backed to the east by a half-alley, on the far side of which was a row of cottages, very low and poverty-stricken. I had a keen sense of this poverty across from our garden. To the west of Lincoln Avenue, were many open fields; to the southwest, another locality of inferior appearance, but which had given to the world a race of boys of exceptional vitality and deviltry. These passed through Lincoln daily on the way to school, and implanted what they had. The boys of the poorer locality to the east, added a commoner but quite as permeating viciousness. So we grew up in touch with all the roughness and toughness of the lower quarter, and added a more finished crookedness of our own.

I cannot remember my first lie, nor my first theft. Against the latter I have a distinct sense of putting up a fight, but cannot recall the in-

cident. I had a native vim for evil in many ways, but believe I was not a natural thief. Lincoln Avenue sieved all that was interestingly bad, as I have said; and there was not much of clean-cut and bonafide boyhood. The names of the boys come back to me with the last word in so many cases—Dead, Dead, Suicide, Prison, Insane, Dead,—with here and there a travelling man. Everything that seemed sport had a roughness and cruelty about it striking to recall.

Walt, my particular friend at this time, a boy of my age and of a very well-to-do home, was away with his people for the summer, when a crowd of Lincoln boys broke into his carriage-house and partially demolished with croquet mallets a fine double-surrey. I was out of this. An investigation followed, and one of the results, was that two brothers farther down the street were kept in their yard for the remaining eight weeks of the summer vacation. We thought it bitter hard for them; ceased to respect the parents entirely. Occasionally we talked with the boys—the fence between. It was a severe bit of fathering; but the fact remains that these two were somehow saved from Lincoln Avenue wreckage.

Walt had his own idea of the affair when he returned. He had a keen sense also of property. His mind supplied a curious understanding for the vandalism—that was right enough—but the

fact that it was *his* carriage-house, (not his father's) was cause for certain irritation.

Walt was full of values. We were of a size and age, he slightly taller or heavier one season, I the next. I felt my inferiority always, and so did he. I was lieutenant, never captain. He had everything. The first telephone I ever saw was put into his house. One week, he possessed a printing-press or a box of tools; another an alcohol steamboat that did perfect ovals in the bath-tub.

Sunday afternoons Walt was dragged away with dark regularity and dressed up. Later I often found him with a pocket full of silver and pennies. Mondays, after school, the purchase or trade of the week would be negotiated. There was never any doubt in Walt's mind regarding the issue of these periods. Often, just as I was beginning to enjoy and appreciate a certain article, his interest in it subsided. No boy was ever more swift to drain the pith of reality and make it his own. At the same time, his estimate of the current value of the article remained strongly in mind as a medium of trade. He became known for squares around as a trader, and enjoyed the reputation. The value of a new possession was heightened in his fancy, if he had the best of the bargain.

I possessed so little, that I did not enter into his scope as a trader, but was always his second

in the arrangements, and largely but not entirely, his confidant. I never shared with any equality these matters which came so easily. I fed his presses, held the boards for him to saw; and in my sharp interest for the operations did many menial services. This rapid passage from one to another world-interest went on for many weeks. Scandal was upon us, and neighbourhood indignation, before I knew that he had profited by a peculiar intimacy with the collection-boxes, and finally had been caught at it. The stealing was not the point; we were light-fingered then; but stealing from the church had an abandonment about it. What Walt suffered for that, I never learned, nor what passed between him and his father and mother. He could hold his tongue. I do know that his point of view did not change; and I do know that he was not imprisoned for anything like eight weeks. Though his income stopped, his inclination for large operations was in no way diminished.

One summer afternoon, we went on a journey to a far tough part of town. I was carrying a grain-bag, as usual not knowing what was on. He walked hastily, his head down. Always his lines were laid beforehand—thief and thoroughbred that he was, and no gossip about it. We entered an alley, forced a difficult entrance through an unglazed window that was boarded with strips, straw packed in. Once inside, in the cool

dark, I heard the doves above and felt the bag in my hand. I remembered, too, that Walt had spoken some days before about a pair of famous carriers that he wanted. I knew little about pigeons, even though he always had a cote full of "commons." He had cats, a dog or two always, a fox or a wild bird from time to time.

The hour was right—late afternoon and the pigeons had come in. I was to follow him up and hold the bag while he entered the nest and chose his game. I remember asking how he'd keep the pigeons after he got them home, thinking that they would fly back to their own cote. He answered, in whispered impatience as we climbed, that he would shut them up for a week. Of course, thought I, dwelling mentally upon my stupidity. He was in the nest. There was a great flapping from the frightened birds, when I heard our summons from below.

I was first down. I do not know how I got down. It never occurred to me to seek to escape. The bag was still in hand. The man of the house was there, a policeman with him. I thought of my mother, choked, but did not cry. They spoke of the patrol-wagon already summoned. Apparently they knew there was a pair of us, for they called to Walt to come down. Still he didn't answer. There was no sound from above. They threatened to go up and get him. I thought he must have escaped over roofs.

They looked at me, but did not ask. The fact is, they knew. The policeman started up, and Walt stirred. I heard him say hoarsely, "I'm coming."

Now tolled off some hard minutes. They didn't ask questions, didn't threaten. It was business-like waiting for the patrol. Walt went to the hydrant several times and took a deep drink. He seemed to drink a gallon each time. The men commented upon it. They looked at their watches impatiently. "It's a longish drive from here," said the policeman. . . . Several times we heard wheels. Finally the man said he'd let us go, but the policeman refused to yield. I remember that policeman's face. At last the man persuaded him to release us, if we would bring our fathers. We were off. Walt accused me of telling them that he was in the loft, but appeared to believe when I swore I hadn't. I asked him what he thought his father would do about it; my idea being to trust to Uncle Will.

"I won't tell him," said Walt.

I gasped at this.

"That was all a bluff," he concluded.

He was right, although I couldn't see it then, and was in a state of suffering and turmoil until I saw my uncle two days afterward. He regarded it rather seriously for him. . . . I never saw that man of the pigeons again. The older I grew, the more I respected him. . . .

Walt and I were always together Friday nights, mostly at his house. Nothing was secret; nothing sacred to us. We profaned ourselves in many ways, but with Walt such matters were not so all-absorbing, as to the other boy across the street; in fact, they were mere incidents of his busy restless mind. They had their place, but did not overpower.

We did much secret reading; Walt was voracious. Openly we read Alger, Adams, Fenn, Fosdick, Henty, Marriot. Early one Friday evening, my mother came over. We had not yet gone upstairs, but were on the floor in the sitting-room as it happened, looking at the big book of Dorè bible pictures. The mothers whispered in their pleased way, doubtless of our beautiful relation.

The strangest veils of illusion are hung between the parent and child. A father is needed for boys; a father who takes time to remember, and who has strong enough vision to look *back*, in order to reach a present adjustment to the boy-mind. The instant the man and boy go different ways, lies and secretiveness result. There is no more important business for a man than to look back from time to time—to find the boy's point of view. He cannot assume yours. You are apt to lose him, if you do not.

We had what Walt called *cougees*—secret hiding-places, reached deviously as a wolverine's

lair. Under the floor of a certain shed in his yard, we had burrowed a nest; and later when pigeons palled, the cote in his loft was partly walled up, so as to form a blind, behind which we had a small room, reached by a passage through the ceiling of the harness-room—a passage that would have endangered human life in any stage, except inspired boyhood. An egg burned over an oil-stove here, tasted better than broiled chicken at home. In this hole we exhausted the oxygen, practised smoking and read the worst novels procurable.

There was a certain series of Saturday mornings in which for me the slaughter-house was a mastering attraction. My thoughts were unspeakable at first—the tail-twisting, the rope, the ring, the ax, the knife, the blood-scared cattle, and the white of their eyes as their heads were drawn down to the floor—the stroke with a sound like nothing else—all the horrible enactments that followed, and the inner discoveries.

I remember wondering about the butchers. They were men among men, not greatly different from other men, outside the abattoir. I saw that other men respected them. I could not presume to tell them that the thing they did every day, called me by its hideous perversion. The same thoughts came to me afterward when I was little more than a boy, afield with troops. Perhaps I was following the same perversion; at

least many of the things I saw, outraged every human fineness. Still in those early days I could not rise against the butchers, nor against my country at war.

About this blood-passion, I prayed. In the nights, the scenes recurring, made me wretched, but when Saturday came again, I dared to fare forth. I felt all the more desolate in this propensity, since Walt was not called to follow it.

We must have been about twenty-five, when Walt and I met after many years. We talked through a Turkish bath. The old days were discussed. The world had scarred us both. Our experiences had been similar in drink and failure, reaction and disease. I had not yet touched bottom then; but I was not rising. A few early "successes"—what a metallic sound that word has—had come to me in syndicate correspondence from afield. Walt liked parts of my work, and disliked other parts. There was one magazine story that he liked particularly. He commented upon that with enthusiasm; and when we spoke of the future, (we were lying cot-to-cot in the cooling-room,) he said:

"If you're going to drink, why don't you learn how to drink? I've heard you have days, when you seem to be afraid somebody else will get some. . . . I've always told people that you would make mighty good in your game, if whiskey didn't beat you to it."

As I see it now, (and think of him who lay there beside Walt,) that was a very wise remark of his, even though he gave me the benefit of a balance, that was against me at the time.

8

NEW HOUSE

A YOUTH is swept by every passing wind; he is part of all that he sees and does. Of necessity shallow, being so largely physical, he imitates, lives in the body, trains the brain. The emotions and passions of childhood are more significant, for they express the intrinsic gift of human spirit. The youth, beginning to depend upon and to express the world, loses the beauty of helplessness which is a forever-challenge to the adult. The youth manifests his environment; the child expresses himself.

A spring afternoon of mixed rain and snow, and my mother came home in the early darkness with the word that she had bought "the house." I had heard of this distantly, with a sort of half-listening. She sat down in the lamp-light, without removing her furs, to tell my grandmother and me. Later in the spring, my aunt and her family came to live in the old house which my grandmother would not leave; and we moved far-

ther up the Avenue. A home of her own had been for years, one of the heart-ideals of my mother. The first sizeable payment had been made with her school money. She continued to teach; and my father's income, while not large, was added; so that we were nicely on the road to competence and commonality. A brother—my father's boy by a previous marriage—came to live with us at this time. I have often wondered what the difference would have meant to me, if things had gone on as begun now, according to my mother's dream—savings, house and property paid for, the education of two boys. But neither she nor I were ever intended for any such calm.

My first inkling of the primal tragedy began at the supper-table before we were fairly settled. Serving us, my father would make certain cutting remarks, each night more reckless and unreasoning. My mother's replies did not prevail against him. Her misery was mixed with rage, too. He was lost in his own formation of sentences, quite absorbed in the goading deviltry of them. The room seemed filled with hell. . . . He had fought hard and manfully for two years, but was falling day by day into the old pit. . . . How many times afterward have I sickened at these beginnings—the impish cleverness, the absence of responsibility, characteristic cuttings of all concerned; and from a man who better almost than

any other, could keep his own counsel and temper. I learned to tally off his periods almost exactly. There would be a time of peace, from two months to ten weeks at first; then a week or ten days in which he reached home for supper a little later each night, his faculties less and less in hand. Then the smash; after this, the remnant gathered in, terrible illness, the vow, resumption of what was left, and the gradual increase of tension on our parts toward the fresh outbreak. . . . He had been a soldier in the civil war, one of the youngest cavalrymen Michigan furnished. A partial loss of hearing resulted from exposure—and his pension quarterly became to us a harrowing interval. My mother broke under strain—was finally brought home from school, and lay for months dangerously ill. I stopped school in this interval, and did housework. It was easy enough for me, but the routine galled.

I had learned nevertheless how remarkably well-bred and deep-minded my father was. Like my Grandfather Levington, his father had been a Methodist preacher in Michigan. This was William Comfort, who died early. I never saw him, but the impression has come that he was a strong-minded disciplinarian, escaping from whose rigid barriers, his sons were loose, indeed. My father's mother was a Hopkins, straight from the *Mayflower* family, a brilliant and excep-

tional woman, her paternal line being the Allens which contained the Ethan of Ticonderoga; indeed she possessed for a time the famous sword, which the Revolutionist brandished, while uttering his historically-modified oath. So conscious of the shortcomings of his personal identity, was my father, that I had to learn for myself that his people on both sides had done many fine things in this country. I think he was as apart from these familiar amenities in thought, as I have been; even if he could not, in looking back, adjust himself to the Irish peasantry where my thoughts of lineage like to dwell. I did him deep injustice always; I exhausted shame for him, but I could love him now.

It was no sweet cool morning glow, this childhood and boyhood, but a red feverish breaking into day, filled with fierce distractions like the morning of the Fourth. I venture to repeat that there were things which I wanted with nothing short of fury, although parents are slow to consider the intensity of young desire. I loved horses, and my only vent for this love was to be near horses belonging to others. I had for a companion in upper Lincoln a rather stolid boy, whose father sold wood and coal and other produce. I remember their kitchen; the smell of creamery and barn about it. I used to go there for milk every day, but could never remain indoors. The odour of the barn would not have

troubled me alone, for I like that. It was the creamery mixture. There was a piebald pony that they occasionally permitted me to ride—a stupid sort of pony, too, with a flat broad back. I learned to stand up, circus-fashion, and loved the beast with a sort of martyrdom. I lived literally from ride to ride.

One Saturday afternoon when the family was leaving entire, I was in and out of the barn while the team was being harnessed. The intensity of my desire for a ride must have penetrated some brain about me, with the result that I was ordered to keep out of the barn while they were gone. This was unusual. They had always given me a keen sense of their property-hood. When they drove out of the yard, it fell like a blight—the temptation. I was carried with it, as I watched the old surrey disappear,—entered the barn, saddled and rode out. But there was no joy in it, for I was afraid, not of a blow, but a look. . . . Another endless summer afternoon.

Things that I desired with intensity, and all matters which incited my deeper interest, set me to writing, as surely as shutters vibrate to certain winds. I was not only reading old Sleuths and Deadwood Dicks at this time, but writing them. "Bareback Bill, the Boy Rider," was considerable of a manuscript, before the complications of his life balked my handling entirely.

Poor little Bill, who rode so well that it never became a day's work with him. He rode range, and every minute in the saddle was such a delight, that wages for riding was the last word in absurdity—except that his mother at home needed money. I remember she had a pansy-bed in the back yard. Bill used to think of it with a gulp of homesickness, when he tethered his pony for the night, and dropped down to sleep by the wolf-scaring fire.

I played much base-ball, yet it was mainly on stolen time—the house and my mother needing me. Walt was a natural ball player, but my hands were never right. I had passed the age of twelve, before making any remarkable progress. In spite of the lightness and small bones of my fingers, the position of catcher had the strong clear call. I concentrated for several seasons on "picking them off the bat" with almost the zeal that had to do with books and writing, my perennial infatuation. I won a good name in amateur circles as a catcher, but had a weakness that was never to be overcome, in throwing to the bases, especially to first and third. There was a period in which I threw to second with good results. In all departments of this and other games I made up for size and strength in speed; and had two seasons of open tackling in football that quite noised the name. I was never beaten in a foot-race by a boy of my age.

One ball game especially, I remember, for the rousing sensation it brought me. The two teams had fought it out in a quiet dogged way—a low close score, and some very good playing. There was a stunted chap named Mark pitching to me; his drop ball, easy to catch, was working admirably. I seemed in a trance; there were a few hard foul flies which I got under; the opposition went out one-two-three, our outfielders idle; the third strikes and foul-tips staid in my mit. For me the illusion of time was suspended almost as in sleep. Innings ran on; I catching in a daze of delight. Our batting periods netted nothing.

I think of it now in reference to good work of a higher kind—when the body and brain are obedient and in order. It was my first sense of the subjective in action. It all worked out perfectly for me that day; I was at peace in a superb sense of the word. A ninth inning, our last bat, two runs to win, and two men on. I was never a long hitter, though I could usually get a base with my speed, on a bunt. Luck gave me the needed single over short field, and I hung on to second with the game won. It was the old, the only situation, of course, and comes to every player; I mention it for the something that was in the air for me as I slid to second—something choked me. The enthusiasm of the team, the winning, the extreme need and precise manner of the fulfilment, gave me a momentary sense of

conquest that has never exactly been duplicated.

My mother's health improved so that she could relieve me of the work of the house, but she never resumed teaching. I was mowing lawns at this time; practically all the lawns of a city block, and had begun to carry papers. This newspaper route was an extraordinary affair. I wonder that such things could be. I left school at three-thirty and walked downtown, a distance of two and one-half miles to the press room of an afternoon daily. There, I crammed into a bag one hundred and twenty-five papers, eight and often twelve pages each. Beginning almost immediately after leaving the office, I worked swiftly for the next two hours up the central thoroughfare on one side, and half way, in all the side streets, to the next avenue. I reached home shortly after six, after doing the second and light half of the route largely at a run. The distance was easily twelve miles. For nearly two years, I continued this six evenings the week, for the sum of five dollars monthly. Yet it didn't hurt me; didn't tire me after the first month; gave me lungs and legs, and doubtless kept down the softness and dreaming so dangerous to a lad of my kind. It was not until I had been graduated for high school at fourteen that I gave up the route.

School, to this time, had been a matter merely of hours and attendance. I seldom thought of it except when actually there. I passed from

grade to grade in a sort of blur, giving no thought to lessons out of school. Whipping had begun to pass from favour, but I did not miss the experience. I respected the principal who rattanned me. She was an Irish woman straight as a spindle, and I dreaded a brush with her. Wintergreen was uncorked one day, just a little before my graduation. A girl became ill from the odour. I was sent to the principal on suspicion. The novelty of innocence was an experience. I did not know who brought the stuff to school, and after I had repeated this several times in the office, she left me there.

It appears that she stared the class upstairs out of countenance—until facts squirmed forth upon the features of the guilty one. A certain Harry was brought down in a much depressed state, following confession. . . . On the last day of school, she sent for me, and said:

"You haven't been a good boy. You've given us lots of trouble, but we can forget that, because you are not a liar."

That was luck, for I was a liar. Yet it was one of the best things that happened to me; there was a tingle about it that helped me for a time, not to be a random liar, at least. I was clean of telling tales, nothing more; and it was something that my Uncle Will had said to me that had kept my mouth shut on several occasions. That woman did me good, whipping and all.

9

INTIMATIONS

WHILE we still lived in the old house, a boy had been killed in the practice of a tumbling act. A summer dusk, four or five boys on Walt's lawn, and one fell upon his neck and shoulders. He arose presently and staggered home—to fever, delirium, and a swift end that silenced us all. At the funeral, it was somehow borne to me that he was thirteen. Soon afterward I suffered a vision that I should die in my thirteenth year.

From then on, I prayed daily that this should not come to pass, believing that the thirteenth year comprised the twelve months following the birthday. I entered upon this period with dark foreboding. There was not a day until I had actually begun on my fifteenth year, that this death element was not a part. The last night I "thanked the Lord" exultantly.

The idea of prayer to a personal God was inherent. It is not a pleasant conception now—this asking for personal needs on the knees, and

placating with praise—and yet, far better that, than detachment on the part of boy or youth, from the sense of relation with the Unseen.

After exceptional cases of evil conduct, common justice forced me, when asking to be absolved from something done, to make a vow to do better. I do not recall breaking any of these vows; but in the main, the broad-day deviltries were not restrained by the better self who suffered for them in the nights. . . . Walt had been brought up to pray, but it was not so intense a system with him—a perfunctory flopping to the knees before getting into bed. At least, this is the way it seemed. I should be deeply surprised if it were otherwise; but one can not be sure. For instance, I confided to no one my steady consciousness of a saving and retributive agency.

Detachment was begun from some of the pernicious accomplishments of lower Lincoln Avenue, though I had relapses, occasional fits of thievery and other abominations. Leather goods fascinated me. I was caught stealing a pair of soft leather gloves, and there was a miserable month in our house. The suffering helped to cure me. I lived a several-life if ever boy did.

There was the school-boy, the voracious reader, the lawn-cutter and paper-carrier, who gave his money to his mother, and of whom the neighbours spoke with pride and pleasure; there was the ball-player and bare-back performer, smelling

of horse, and keen for a chance to ride; the occasional thief, cigarette-smoker and climber of tower-lights; the queer small ruffian to whom the dusk brought dreams of the prairie, the herds, gun-fighting and night-raids, to whom physical courage was the highest attribute of man, and to whom woman was somehow identified with heaven and not with earth. And there was still the other, who paid for every evil with remorse and prayer—praying secretly to a personal God, to be cleared from temptation, cleansed from the effects of evil actions and profaning thoughts.

I had not learned how to study in the grammar schools; nor had I been called upon to express myself in written words during that eight years' course. Yet in that period, there was no beauty, no experience of importance, nor any great bit of reading, that did not start within me a curious producing instinct. I recall an Indian play, called *The White Chief*, partly written before I left lower Lincoln; then the first spring at the new house, there was a queer study of flower-beds and boyish aspirations which ran through several chapters. I have mentioned Bare-back Bill, the Boy Rider, which grew to a formidable manuscript, before it became too much for me. The family recognised my bent, and I shall never forget a remark of my brother on the subject. He was six years older, and could "make anything." His artistry with ham-

mer, nails and a good pocket-knife, was the wonder of the neighbourhood. He rigged a bench in the cellar; it was here that I told him one day of the certain story I was writing.

"You'll be a great writer some day," he said, with peculiar self-immolation, "and where'll I be then? Just a wood-butcher—"

There was a depth of kindness I shall never forget, but the sorrow of it was almost equal. He could grant me a future above my dreams, and at the same time detach himself from any ideal out of the common.

The point is this: I had begun to write at six, was never far from some idea relating to it, yet I reached the rhetoric classes of high school, aged fourteen, without knowing anything about commas, periods, paragraphs and the like. Now I could have learned swiftly any rudiment that had to do with writing, and I object to the common school education covering eight years, that failed to find out my strength.

In my first rhetoric work, I tried to connect the sentences by "which's" and "however's" to a proper paragraph length, before hammering home a period; in short, I was under the delusion that a period should not appear in the middle of a paragraph. With all my reading I had not looked close enough at book construction, to spare me from brutalising my own efforts with ill-balanced clauses and phrases. In writing I must have

avoided the evil, in sheer unconsciousness of the little implements and mannerisms by the way. After a bad mark or two on their account, I identified them for all time.

I was small, pimpled, belonged to the poorer element, walked home and to school, had no money for lunch at recess—and was made to realise continually these shortages. I considered myself inferior in every way except in writing, but I had no reason to know, that secretly flaming under many another suffering breast, was a deathless ambition like mine.

High school sank into the humdrum misery of other things. The second term, I narrowly missed failure in three studies and did fail in two. This put the idea of finishing the course out of mind. In my own fancy I began to be a specialist; and yearned positively to show quality somewhere. I was not answering myself, nor any of the reasons for being. It was in this vague restlessness that I undertook Greek, the hardest study in the school, under what proved the best teacher I ever faced. His name was Sherrard, and he was a Soul.

First of all, he was a taskmaster. He put fear into me. I worked for him; I got the Greek, and it was harder for me because I had been indifferent in Latin. That semester gave me the first sensation of movement of the brain. I began to see how head-work was done; nat-

urally the first thing that was affected was my passion for writing.

An essay at this time came with singular fluency. The doing was a thrall; in it I met a mysterious peace. I saw that other things might slip; that all but Greek and essays might slip, yet all would be well; I saw that in spite of what any one might say to the contrary, all would be well. I have often wondered what would have happened to me—had I met *understanding* from some one at this time. Sherrard would have understood, but he was a busy man, a sick man, too. It was a school of thousands. Perhaps it was better for me as it was; for my especial niche, it was right; yet I know this: Had some wise man taken me at this time for experimental development of my specialty, I should have gone very fast under his care, and been spared much wretchedness.

To my dismay and alarm, the essay just mentioned was marked merely "Good." The system ran, "Excellent, Good, Fair, Unsatisfactory, Poor." No errors were noted on the copy, when it was returned to me. I knew that the quality of idea and composition was unusual. Either this was so, or I was insane, and this world, hell.

Shortly afterward upon assembling in the rhetoric class, the teacher ordered us to put books away, and to write an essay upon the subject now

given. Forty minutes of production under her eye, a session of the purest teaching I ever encountered in school, but so extraordinary to the class, that many of the best students balked. They had no props, no preparation, no precedents. All the plan of study was whipped from under. Model girls, lessons invariably prepared, were out in strange elements. It was a great hour for me. I felt that death were better than to be caught common in this trial.

This was the answer to my former essay, as I learned afterward. The mark "Good" was tentative, put there on suspicion that my work was stolen. I turned in the watched production, and it was found exceptional.

Greek went on. During the last year at school, I did essays for a half-dozen students and without a pang for the cheating. So much for lower Lincoln beginnings. The fact is I took deep pleasure in playing with the rhetoric classes. It was not always the work, however, to do these marketable essays too well. For instance a student in his third year, whose record throughout was unsatisfactory, would draw instant suspicion if he handed in an essay designed for the Excellent mark. So I had to lower the character of the service. The fact is, I agreed to get the mark desired—Fair, Good, Excellent—to order, at the rate of five cents the hundred words. I have found that it works much the same in the world;

that those who profess to hold the pulse of the public, often insist that "Fair" is all the public can stand.

I remember writing a half-dozen essays on the one subject, "Portia: A Character Study"; and another full set on "The Three Caskets." My mother was much interested in the essay work, and confided afterward that she had watched me one afternoon preparing a certain appreciated result. I might have stolen anything but the stuff of writing. It was Greek with Sherrard that expanded my skull, and first let my brain breathe.

A fellow student who lived opposite was very interesting and friendly at this time. He had ample car fare and spending money at all times, so that I had to avoid him on account of a generosity I could never return. His family was a remarkable establishment—a house of happiness—open to innumerable friends. His younger sister had not interested me, but an older one seemed all that woman could be. She was sweet and Irish (her father also a nobleman risen from the peasantry in the next county to my grandfather) of sound wit and unfathomable sweetness. I was going to say that my brother liked her, but it was more than that. One evening before dark, I talked with her for a few minutes. It was just the time in our lives when the difference of two or three years, made the difference between a boy and a woman. She told me about

all the babies she knew, and what they had said. She quoted them inimitably, our faces close together. Suddenly I remembered that there had been young onions for supper.

"I had forgotten," said I, drawing away.

"I hadn't," said she.

Another day, I saw the man who had come to marry her. He had been a great student, a football player of reputation, and had taken up the career of teacher. There was no doubt in my mind about his being a fine man, but I resented his coming.

Playing ball one afternoon at Belle Isle I was asked to take part in a second game. The new comers, local street railway men, were raw but full of enthusiasm. I caught for them through a practice game, and was offered a position in the downtown offices, so that I could play with the team. My mother did not insist on refusal, for we were in need; still she treasured a hope that my school days were not ended. The position which was given me by the company was not exactly what I expected; in fact, I was put on the elevator at three dollars the week.

Manipulating that old hydraulic lift was but one of many activities. I kept up the Greek for several months; did some writing and drinking; studied girls, and burned car tickets. The drink shop was next door, and there were lunches there. The girls were ticket-counters who worked on the

third floor of the office suite, some twenty of them, and rode up and down with me four times a day. I was well treated and had a happy time, but many evils developed.

This car ticket burning was a tempting feature. It was conducted under the eye of the manager of the ticket-counters, and he was a good man. There was a brick furnace, the electric mechanism of which I never understood, though I operated it. The large part of the day's supply of tickets collected on the cars, was already punched by the conductors, but there were some hundreds used daily in exchange, on a rival line, that were turned in whole. These were counted by two or three of the girls of tried integrity. The weakness of the plan for their destruction must be laid at the door of the good man who trusted me.

The brick work in the long neck of the furnace was very faulty inside, and easily clogged. I found that in removing one of the bricks, a ledge remained into which several hundred of the unplugged tickets might be thrust at each burning. I did not realise how I was hurting myself; nor what a despicable thing it was to betray the confidence of a man who held me in honour. The thought that made this possible was that I was taking a few needed dollars from a very rich corporation. It was necessary to climb over the transom to the office-room in the

evening, to rescue the smoky packages of tickets from the niche.

I did not do well with them. Having a quantity of anything, the same lost value in my eyes. My own city transportation was provided by the company. There was obviously no explanation for my possession of car tickets in quantity. I dared confide to no one. The fact is, Walt's generalship was not at hand. Drinking increased; I was seventeen and addicted to cigarettes and dreams of clothes. . . . Just half-way to now, and driving straight afield.

There was a story on the hangers at this time that covered weeks in the building—*A Despotic Destiny*. It gave me high hours. I put it on a typewriter at least twice, hunting each letter, and using but one hand. It had the low red glare of downtown nights in it, the bleakest animal conception of life. A woman moved there, and wrought her misunderstanding tragically. The manuscript travelled two or three times, and then was taken by a little publication for ten dollars, received a year later.

At this time, I got the dream of newspaper reporting; and though it seemed too great a thing for me, an elevator boy was spoiled. If I could earn ten dollars in writing after hours, surely I could earn twelve dollars a month writing all the time at home; so I left the street railway office, applied for newspaper work, and had my

days to write; my mother willing to take a chance with me, even in our poverty. It was the first of many jobs I lost to write at home.

I missed the town and the little money, but wrote and wrote. The second story sent away, I never saw or heard of again. I tried to sell things to newspapers, but could not get them read with any regularity. At this time I heard the story of a woman disciple of Swami Vivekananda. She was preparing for illumination in the silence and winter solitude of an island, in one of the Michigan interior lakes. The story seemed very clear and full to me; but was done without much hope and delivered to a Detroit newspaper.

That was a wintry afternoon of early darkness. I heard the presses throbbing below, and smelled that inimitable warm ink and paper atmosphere, but something kept warning me, "It is not yours yet; you have not yet earned the right to these delights." I was told to come back the second day.

The city editor was the greatest of beings. In many ways he was very much of a man, this O. C. —huge, handsome, brisk, an individual, a scraggy little dog at his feet. . . . He looked at me, beckoned me to a seat, and then drew forth my manuscript from a desk corner. Something the way my heart had turned to Uncle Will, it turned now in awakened hope to O. C. All that

I had known downtown before was unlike this (in my riotous ideality). Here was Man; here was the artist, the writer man—as he should be, the beauty of the Greek upon him.

"Did you write this?"

"Yes," I said, in fear that I might have done a very evil thing.

"How old are you? . . . And what are you doing?"

"I'm writing."

I divulged *The Despotic Destiny*, and added, "I am waiting for a position with you. I applied weeks ago."

"Good God, did you?" he said. "I ought to look to those things more."

He took a pencil and crossed out my large and laboured introduction, covering the first page, asking questions how I got the story.

"It's a hell of a good story," said he. "We'll use it."

I thanked him—brokenly, I'm afraid. When I was half-way across the city room, he called:

"Comfort."

It was not the last time it sounded across the editorial floor. I seemed to know this, hurrying back.

"Did you leave your address?"

"It's with the application."

"Write it here."

He gave me a sheet of copy paper.

"I'll send for you, when I need you."

"Thank you."

And then alone in the darker hall, I smelled the warm inky air again. It was nearer; I loved all men and things. . . . I was close to being run over, crossing the streets on the way home.

10

STRAWBERRIES

O. C. sent for me within a week; and put me at a table in his office.

"In a newspaper story," said he, "write the answer to questions you would ask, if you were deeply interested in some happening another had just seen. Make it crisp. Hammer your sentences home. The last sentence of a paragraph should be a brace for all—a crosspiece."

Presently I was running to and fro in a daze—doing, doing. *Daze* is characteristic of mine in the midst of fresh and vital things—loss of the sense of passing hours and deep absorption.

Never a question asker, it was easier for me to risk answering questions that I had not asked. I was never to be a star reporter on this account. Facts were foreigners; I was a liar in training. There were no rights of man in the world for me—beyond the word of O. C. at the city desk, I knew nothing of the paper's politics or policy, but his word was my law. I could silence any

injustice at his suggestion. This is one of the atrocities of the time; that a cub-reporter without judgment, vision, fixed morality, or any but glib values, has a certain power of place in a municipality. O. C. was square and very much a man, but the situation exists, and all city editors are not of his sort.

He was unvaryingly good; saw something of the velocity of my ambition and used it. There is no doubt about my adoration. I did very well as feature writer and "general assignment" man. One laughable adventure was tragedy at the time. O. C. sent me to Mt. Clemens to do a banquet . . . summer afternoon and evening; a hundred men in the flush of trade, stories and stimulus; excellent wine and food; boat rides and moonlight; and overtopping all for me, the marvel that this was work; that this which I saw and enjoyed required only be told; that all things had come to me, since that which I must do to live, was what I must do to live. I had found my work. What I loved to do, sustained my body to serve it. I drank freely and kept quiet, studied my own sensations with the same joy that I regarded exterior things.

Now, the man who owned my paper was there, the Shipbuilder. He was a Scot, very healthy, very rich, a banker, identified with shipping and construction interests on the Great Lakes. Bearded in iron grey, erect and small-eyed, he

stood at the head of the table and addressed the company. I scarcely listened; certainly a man would not want to be reported in his own paper.

I pitied him. A man who owned a paper, and couldn't be a reporter on it. I would not have changed with him for all his ships and banks. He could not know O. C. as I knew him—O. C. the good of the world to me.

Next morning early, I turned in my story for the first edition. O. C. used to come down and get things started, and then retire for breakfast. It was so this morning. The first edition was on the street when he returned, my story of the banquet appearing—all that I could ask, uncut and flowery to suit. (I lived from day to day; indeed my vitality rose and fell according to the quantity of my work which appeared, as written.) O. C. was called to the Shipbuilder's room. The door opened after several moments; I heard this:

"If I have to let Comfort go, I'll go, too."

The door was shut again. O. C. emerged after a second period and took his seat at the desk, I watching him in the thrall of fear. He turned at last.

"How could you do it?" he asked.

"What?"

"Miss the old man's speech at the banquet?"

"Why, I—I didn't want it. I didn't think he would want it—in his own paper."

O. C. flung his arms about his head. . . . I had said something unanswerable. I didn't know it at the time. I thought he was grieved and disappointed in me. I could not know then that he was an innocent like myself; that he would always forget through life, even as I, that Trade is on the opposite side of the mountain. . . . What I saw most clearly was that there was a crack in my dream; that my position was precarious; that O. C.'s was, too, because of me. And I had asked no more of life than this. I loved the paper, the building, the boards of the floor, composers, pressmen. I had watched the crime-reporter drumming at his machine—a twelve-dollar a week man, while I was drawing six or eight—and vowed in my heart that I would take his price for life. It was enough with such happiness.

But the crack did not break; weeks passed and I caught on better and better; my assignments rising in importance and compelling more and more space. Night life, however, at this time was becoming more and more destructive. Formerly the editorial end of newspaper work was much more closely identified with alcohol. Older men rose and fell, holding weakly to their little past brilliance. The best of those in their prime just above me, were hard-living, hard-drinking men, without homes. These were my companions. One who loved Hugo suffered

much of my companionship, though I was not twenty. He was like Walt in many ways, kept his head, talked his way in and out, without losing temper, saw life through a film of *Les Miserables* pictures, and ate what was nearest at hand, so long as there was occasional whiskey and constant cigarettes. I was never like that. Whiskey would not keep its place in my consciousness. After certain indulgence, it prevailed. When I took a drink it was with the thought of the next. He used to lecture me on my flimsy self-command.

Among my earlier assignments was a set of religious meetings in a remote part of the city of which I made somewhat a feature, quoting the "experiences" and the more fiery portions of the sermons. These meetings ran for thirty days. A certain woman used to smile at me. She had wonderful eyes. We met, and walked home together. Once or twice I went in to her house. We had strange silences. She was at least fifteen years older. When she spoke, it was of the meetings and of her zeal for me to be better; yet these nights were profoundly emotional. There were moments in which I seemed to sense her unspeakable torture. That churchly thing withheld me. She was silent, strange—and I very young. I am glad it was so, but there is a tragedy about it. . . . She was one of many who

realise the loveliness of life too late—who dream and are changed.

A little group of us—the crime-reporter, who afterward became congressman, the Hugo-lover and one or two others—used to gather at a milliner's house. Certain young women were usually present. Morals were not taut exactly, but neither were they broken. The memory of those evenings is not unpleasant, but there was, I venture, a sleep-late demoralisation upon the house. One evening as we were singing, a woman came in. She was the most perfect creature I had ever seen; so pretty (I called it beauty then), that it did not occur to me to rise and be made known to her, when the others were introduced.

I did not hear her name. She sat, her frail back and yellow hair to me. She played a little, as she talked; her words did not come to me, nor what the others said, only the ravishing sense of her loveliness. Presently she was gone. It was early in the evening; she went alone. I was subdued; the house palled. I went home. I did not ask her name.

A month afterward, with a certain older reporter, I was on the big general feature of a masonic meet. The paper went to press at three, with almost the entire front page done between us. There had been champagne all day, but the movement and the intense activity of mind, had

kept the fumes from unsteadying me. Even in the leisure afterward, when we sat down in a buffet to talk it over, I was normal and pleasantly athirst.

My companion of this day had been closer than ever before. He had won my admiration, had helped me in every way he could. Just now, he seemed to see in me, a most unsettling future for himself. He became sad as we talked together; the sadness was of a nature that stirringly appealed, for as he expressed it: "You are coming into all that I'm losing." A man even in drink who gathers wreckage about himself, and sets a boy on top of it—is sure of a listener. Yet in his picture of my makng good, there was the tragedy of his passing. It hurt like that remark of my brother at the work-bench in the cellar.

Before dark, he became loosened and vague, asking almost as a last thing, for me to go home with him. I would have done that. . . . And now I am telling you of a June night about seven, and still daylight. We walked the mile to his house. I entered with him. He passed ahead, into the dark hall. A woman's voice began, but was quickly hushed. He repeated my name, and announced that he would lie down until supper was ready. The woman came forward. In the light of the doorway where I still was standing, I saw the woman who had called at the mil-

liner's house. . . . At the supper table, I refused strawberries. She looked at me saying that she had stemmed them, and that they were especially good. . . . It rained. The man asked me to stay for the night, sent a messenger to my house, and brought some bottled beer with him when he came back. Even that was secondary. He went to sleep on the sofa again. . . . She was playing in the darkened front room; I behind her, as it was in the beginning. She turned to me, her fingers still playing.

I had no words. I did not even think of him. I only saw her, and knew the wonder of her turning to me. . . . Then it was later, and we were upstairs, she showing me the room where I was to sleep. She went in first, lit the gas, turned it so it would not flare, touched the pillows, separated the coverings, went to the window, and drew the shade down; then turned. I was still standing in the doorway, watching her.

My hands stretched out to the door-frame; she came forward slowly to me, her eyes holding mine. Very close she came until my arms fell about her. She tarried but a second. I thought I should never know another such instant. I awoke to sunlight after rain, and lay there for a time, listening for her step below.

11

PISTOL

I MUST have taken away from her house in the morning some assurance of seeing her again. . . . It was afternoon. A note from her was in my hands. I thought it could not be true, for the writing was childish. It told me to meet her at once in the milliner's house.

She was there—in brown—the sunlight pencilling the walls and floors through the imperfectly fitted shades. She was angry at something the milliner had said, before I arrived. She said that we must never see each other again.

I had expected that. All I knew of the world made me realise the inevitability of her saying just that. I believed it. She went forth with me, as the dusk was coming on; she asked me to walk ahead so she could look at me. I obeyed reluctantly. She arranged to meet me across the river the next afternoon.

I went home. Nothing downtown held me, neither the crime-reporter, nor the Hugo-lover.

The rest was reason, until I walked with her again. We parted in the dusk across the river, I taking the second ferry and dreaming of the coming day, when we should meet again.

One afternoon dusk, several days later, she would not have me wait for a later ferry, but bade me cross the river with her. We walked up through the city together, and most of the distance to her house. She halted at last and said:

"I can't stay there another night. I will go and tell him. Then I'll cross the river again—to-night. Watch for me at the Homestead. Don't mind if it's late. I will come."

. . . I did wait long. It was a turning-point for me, but I hardly thought of that. I watched the cars. There was not a moment in which I believed fully that she would come, not even when she said it; and yet, I waited and waited and watched the cars. The Homestead was down the river; the cars fifteen minutes apart. Between each car I slowly drank a tall shell of ale. Sometimes it seemed I was out on a great story—the losing of which meant the coming of a woman. For once in my life I was ready to betray the Story. I was ready to die to have her come, indeed to betray the Story meant the same thing—a readiness for death.

The time did not drag so long between cars. I seemed cool and comfortable, all faculties set

in order; yet the little Canadian barroom was not so bright to my eyes. . . . There were two cars more; one was coming. It was almost empty—an open car like the others, with only three or four people in it. I saw the figures, not the faces. The car turned slightly along the river road and stopped.

My eyes were not doing their part. I did not see her step down. Her hand was upon my arm.

"I'm so sorry you had to drink," she said.

I was broken, beyond words. She had done this thing; she was there beside me, the car gone, the single light on the porch of the Homestead opposite, and the warm moonless night about us. . . . She was very tired. There had been a scene. He was following, had threatened to kill us both. Some friend of his was with him. Her coming had made me see clearly what was gone. Not that I would have had it changed; not that I regretted the price. Only I saw other things with clearness now.

Hastening along the dark road, we turned into the first lane toward the river. The boats were going up and down, the big lake freighters—green lights down-bound with the current to Erie, and the red lights up-bound to St. Clair and Huron. The channel was very close to us. . . . I wonder if she sensed that the serpent enters Eden when a man stops to think.

She was carrying a little pistol. I laughed

and drew it from her. The thing was loaded, but it was such a little gun.

"Suppose you take it and kill me," she said, "then kill yourself."

I had no thought of her seriousness. "You take it and kill me first," I replied.

She placed the gun under my coat. I could not see her face, did not like it there, brushed it away.

"You would live a long time," she whispered, "if you waited for me to kill you."

O. C. was out for breakfast when I reached the office. The managing editor came toward me, head down and hard faced. I had something coming from the cashier, he said. I was not surprised, but crushed. It hurt more in the day, than I had thought possible in the night. I wanted to see her, too, but had no idea where she was. . . . I went back toward noon to the office, with a wordless yearning for something from O. C., and the thought of her message that was to come.

He was out again. There was no message. I stopped to talk for a moment with a reporter. The managing editor came forward to me again, his head down, his eyes holding me with a hardness that I see now.

"You have no business around here," he said.

That afternoon she did send for me, but the message was not delivered, for I was not at the

office, nor at home. I waited for the Hugo-lover at his usual place of resort, but it was dusk before he came. He told me that the woman had shot herself, but had done a poor job of it; that she was calling for me at the hospital.

I backed away from him. He asked where I was going.

"To the hospital."

"You couldn't get within a city block of there," he said.

I sat down on something nearby.

"Let's have a drink," he said presently.

I arose and joined him. It seemed to me that I had no other friend. The great need of him that moment, made me know his evening could not be given to me. It came soon afterward:

"Sorry, I can't see you to-night."

I went out into the street, and wandered. I was not even athirst. I walked past the hospital, looked at the lit windows, wondering in which room a woman called for me. . . . Sitting on the curb in the darkness at a distance, I thought of home. It was as if I had been years away—I thought of my mother and father and brother. I recalled that my father had been at his best when I left, in the midst of a lull between his battles. I arose and went across the city to my house. . . .

My father looked up from his reading.

"Your mother has been worrying," he said.

She heard my voice and hastened in.

I do not know what I said.

"Surely you don't have to go out again tonight?" she asked.

"No. Oh, no."

I could not tell them now that I was off the paper. It seemed as if I must stay right there —just sit in the midst of them, and not speak. Everything in the world, every place in the world, was unreal. Sitting there with them under the lamp, I met the old miracle of a mother's unquestioning gladness in her son's return. . . . I held to that—sitting near her, without words —as one would hold a rare gift in his hands.

12

CINCINNATI

IN the house we now occupied, there was a low, unfinished third floor. I fitted a desk there, and the morbid condition of mind turned me to verse. I have often noted how emotional unrestraint enforces a lyrical form of expression, even though sense and direction are tortured. Such a siege I had in that attic with emotional and unprofitable verse, that I was spared afterward, except from very occasional indulgences. A certain rhythm starts, and carries the idea for a few measures. Beyond that my mind turns lame now, and the processes are hateful—the truckling of thought to form. The more I think about work, the more clearly it appears to me that any set form is but a crutch for the weak. The thought in the mind is the whole business of the expression. According to the exactness of the parallel between the thought and the utterance, is the value.

. . . All the roads turned cityward for my

eyes; especially did they draw me, as night came on, moving downward like swift streams. But I had nothing for the City, neither money to travel alone, nor companions who held a place for me. The words and the look of the managing editor would wake me with sweating in the night. O. C. had not found it possible to get me on another local paper. The woman of the strawberries—how queerly I came to think of her with those first words at the supper table—had made rapid recovery and returned to her home. It was a period of darkness. Evil was restrained, but not my eagerness for it. I could not hold the high sense of home that had come to me in the burning of fatigue and the bitter stresses. I had no thought to do any other than newspaper work. The verses were but of the senses, and brought me none of the replenishment of higher labour. I see something of the young bull dog in that boy-man of nineteen—out and down from the fighting, pried and beaten off, whipped and locked up—but looking out of his prison with the same low concentration, living upon the fight, thirsting for its renewal.

Nothing that would appeal to me now, could have changed me then. I was atrocious. I wanted money to drink with—money to take my place *among men*—money in case the woman called; money, in short, to go to the devil. No

one knows the need of money, until he is caught and crippled in the passions of the senses. Thus caught, one is insulated from reality.

My mother had a sublime patience—so long as I was at the writing. We were incredibly poor, I an added burden, but there was no protest while I wrestled with verses—that I hid from her eyes. I almost hesitate to write it—the thing is so trite and pitiful—those were the suicidal days. The end of my Uncle Tom was much in mind; and one does not brood upon this subject to any length without an apparition of the fascinating ease of the thing. If the thought fully forms, one must reckon with it afterward.

I have not thought of those attic days, as now, for many years. It is good to be held to them by this writing, for I can see better what is about me. Had I been called a month ago to such a one in his attic; and been given to see as deeply into his perversion, as I see now into mine own of those days,—I might have washed my hands of him in disgust, saying:

"I can not make him understand. Others more ready to understand, are for me. This creature is caught in such vile and obvious devil-tries. He hasn't even learned the shallow nastiness of night pavements. He wants money to go back to the muck. He burns with lust and calls it love; he wallows in turgid expressions of desire and calls it poetry. He yearns for the

downtown bars—thinking to take his place among men there."

A man is at his worst, when he begins to choose whom he shall help; when he gathers together an elect, saying: "Upon these shall I bestow my goods." Human business is to help the nearest; and when one says of a sufferer: "This creature is too far down for me to understand," he sends forth the perfect call to be tested in such depths. If he has already passed through them, he challenges a return of such low miseries, for one is only finished with an evil when he preserves an instant understanding of it, and an enveloping sympathy for others near and far on the black roads behind. Even the bull pup may be turned against his instincts, if the understanding of the fancier is deep enough.

One night the current caught me. I knocked at G. W.'s door—a reporter whom I had little known in the days of companionship with the Hugo-lover and the crime-reporter. He welcomed me in a way that stopped my throat. I asked only to sit with him, to smoke and talk of editorial things.

"Come on, we'll go out," he said.

I told him I was broke.

"I'm not," said he.

And we went from bar to bar drinking. We talked. I lost my shames and fears, saw the future again. He told me high comments from

O. C. on my work; that all agreed this cloud would soon pass. After midnight, G. W. found a place that kept open, and where he had credit; after some time, we rocked to his room and slept together. I love him to this hour.

Last night, I regarded him, as he sat across the room—a clean and a kindly man. Because I was writing this, I recalled that night. It was all but lost to his memory. A more recent night, in which he helped me, was far dearer to his fancy. We talked of others of those days—of the crime-reporter, the Hugo-lover, and of men who have fallen away.

"G. W.," I said, "they didn't rope you down for thirty days to make you quit; yet, you are here, better than ever. I call it pretty fine business on your part. You don't drink very much, do you?"

"He doesn't drink at all," said the woman, who married him.

And G. smiled in his happy way. He wanted me to hear it just so. They are dear to me. I'd go to them again, if I were down. I wrote somewhere, thinking of them—that a man makes his best friends, when his needs are most desperate; before the world calls a truce with him.

A position was obtained by an uncle for me on a Cincinnati paper; and I happened to find a good story during the first morning's work. I had been writing not more than fifteen minutes,

when the city editor looked over my way and asked if I were doing a book. . . . It was a different sort of newspaper work, cheap, nasty, sensational, all head and no text—no real chance for me.

The town showed me its worst at once. The hotel I lived in was a hazardous bit of the underworld, kept by a man for purposes other than profit. There was always a set of drained and dozy young men in the office—seemingly lost to the passage of hours. The proprietor was a handsome person with magnificent manner. Women guests were discouraged in the establishment. He went up with me in the elevator one night; I understood before we entered the room. . . . I found another room downtown. All the unkempt bohemia that a decadent could yearn for was my environment.

The office assigned me the police court. For several hours each day, I saw human suffering at its cheapest, sending in paragraphs and bulletins by messenger. The work drew forth no good. Though I did not know it then, I required as food, a quality of tasks that tested my limitations every day. I told one of the men that I was working a bit during the evenings on "outside stuff." Presently the managing editor called me and said that this was not permitted on his paper. I was absurd enough to submit. On the third or fourth pay day, as I sat in a barber's

chair, my salary was stolen from my outer coat. I could not pay for board and room, nor send anything home. I never caught up after that in Cincinnati. My efforts to be decent were not manful at best; they flattened out. It was drink and cigarettes and the passing call of the street —a crazing misery that moved from mad stimulation to stupor and inertia. . . . Some one had insulted me. . . . I was looking for some one, and had an open knife in my overcoat pocket. . . .

I stopped in the street—Longworth Street in '98—and my hand closed over the open knife. Could this be I?

The picture ran out in my mind, as if the knife had been used—I caught, locked up. I saw the police court changed, next morning; I, not at the reporter's desk, but in the dock, an officer explaining what I had done. It all seemed very natural. . . . The touch of the open knife had shocked and sobered me. I had always hated a knife. The next morning I could not recall what had been said or who it was that crazed me.

Prisons are filled with men thus blindly driven by energies they do not understand. Drink and drugs let down the bars; and destructive forces, as foreign to them, as the knife-passion was to me, crowd in and gain their ends for a season. All self-indulgence is self-destructive.

When I think of prisons; of the men who send other men there; of chairs of death and hang-

ings, and of all that bring these things about—it comes to me that the City is organised hell; that there is no end to our cruelty and stupidity. I bought from door to door in city streets the stuff that makes murder; I sat in the forenoons under the corrective forces, which were quite as blindly stupid and cruel.

The women I passed in the night, appeared often in the morning. I talked to them in the nights, and heard them weep in the days; I saw them in the nights with the men who judged them in the days. Out of all that evil, there was no voice; out of all the corrective force was no voice. The City covered us all. I was one and the other. The women thought themselves beasts; the men thought themselves men—and, voiceless between them, the City stood.

The most tragic sentence I ever heard, was from the lips of one of these women. . . . I talked with her through the night. She called it her work; she had an ideal about her work. Every turning in her life had been man-directed. She confessed that she had begun with an unabatable passion; that men had found her sensuousness very attractive when it was fresh. She had preserved a certain sweetness, through such stresses that the upper world could never credit. Thousands of men had come to her; all perversions, all obsessions, all madness, and drunkenness, to her alone in this little room. She told

of nights when twenty came. Yet there was something inextinguishable about her—something patient and optimistic. In the midst of it all, it was like a little girl speaking:

"*I wake up in the morning, and find a man beside me. I am always frightened, even yet,—until I remember. I remember who I am and what I am. . . . Then I try to think what he is like—what his companions called him—what he said to me. I try to remember how he looked—because you know in the morning, his face is always turned away.*"

Does it help you to see that we are all one? . . . Yet I couldn't have seen then, trained by men and the City. I belonged to the ranks of the corrective forces in the eyes of the City—and she, to the destructive. . . . She would have gone to the pen, I sitting opposite waiting for something more important to make a news bulletin. . . . From the City's point of view, I was at large, safe and sane, inasmuch as I had failed to find—God knows whom it was—whom I wanted to stick a knife into—for God knows what.

The extreme seriousness with which men regard themselves as municipal correctives—as soldiers, lovers, monopolists—has risen for me into one of the most remarkable facts of life.

I can not close this chapter in Cincinnati. It was a hell-portion throughout. They gave me

re-write to do at the office finally, and I made good at that. I liked the theatre very much, but the staff was large, the passes few. It prevailed upon me in my demoralisation, that I was not even getting my share of these passes. I took blank slips from the editor's desk and filled them out myself. I was caught about ten days later using the last of them. It happened very quickly. I came into the office, after luncheon, looked up to find the city editor and his assistant standing above me, instead of sitting at their desks. Something was said about passes, about a *thief*. I answered that I had not had a square deal in the theatre disposals. With all Cincinnati had shown me, I was not prepared for what happened. In the midst of my sentence, the city editor's hand raised above me—the two largest fingers forked, pointed at my eyes.

I did not know what it meant. The fork descended—but I was spared blinding. The middle finger tore the bridge of my nose, and the index finger opened the bony corner of my right eye. . . . I remember his face now. There was silence all about. . . . Over night, I succeeded in borrowing money to get home. My mother was glad to see me.

13

SOLDIER

THERE is a hangover to all evil habits learned in boyhood. One accustomed to lie in early years, will find stress later, in which a lie will be flicked from him, long after he has grown out of the sphere of untruth; in fact, after he has nothing but scorn for the possible fruits of lying. In the same way, one who has long put away the habit of theft, and who in ordinary coolness would be removed from anything but the humorous side of temptation, may suddenly find himself rushed by a set of conditions in which the old facility operates.

Though I quickly caught the rhythm of health again, the prison house had closed. Very far from sensitiveness of early boyhood did I stand; and as far from the sensitiveness of manhood. I was just twenty. Cincinnati had covered six or seven months. O. C. was away; there was not yet an opening for me in Detroit.

Nothing comes to me clearly from the next few

months, before my enlistment in the regular cavalry, not even if I saw the woman of the strawberries again. I arranged to furnish newspaper letters from soldier-service in the Philippines, and told my mother about the departure. . . . I wonder why I pause now—as if to make something right. My mother knew that it was no use to struggle with me about going away. I felt something of her sorrow. My father was in the throes of his last descent—my brother away—and I leaving her. I could not chronicle such a merciless situation in fiction. I should hesitate to chronicle the commonness of one being caught in the sentimental epidemic of hatred for the Spaniard. My mother was left alone in the climax of her miseries.

My troop was supposed to be in San Antonio. . . . A shuddery pause in Cincinnati. . . . It was the first of June. There was an army officer on the train, of the cavalry by the broad yellow tape he wore. I took a seat near him and finally spoke, saying with eagerness that I was to join troop K. of the Fifth. He did not answer. He did not even reprimand me for addressing him. It was my first brush with the officer-and-man business. My adventure was spoiled; patriotism slowed up. Conditions did not improve until I smelled the magnolia trees.

No halt in San Antonio; my troop had left for the east, instead of the west. I missed the com-

mand in New Orleans, but had a night there in the all but empty post; on to Mobile the next morning, and presently east again to Tampa. I might have expected an explanation regarding the change in orders, having been enlisted for Philippine service, but the cavalry officer had shattered my innocence. I was a hair on a horse's back. It was my business to stick if I could—through all combings.

We made our beds between the unheaved palmetto roots at Tampa. I have needed a strong rebounding body. A boy's robustness came back to me in the first Tampan days—a life of coarse food, sleeping out, and horses everywhere. Late in the second week, a telegram dispatched from Detroit on the day I left, came to hand, having followed my curious itinerary among the southern and gulf cities. I sat down by the picket-line and read of my father's death. He had been alone in the house, a duplex. The woman next door had heard his hands upon the wall, as he made his last journey through the hall. In the depths of late years, his mind had often turned to his brother's self-destruction. He had promised to repeat. I saw his life clearly, as I sat there among the horses; and I see it even now more clearly.

That was a vast mobilisation of troops on the Tampan plain. The Rough Riders were next to us, a noisy undisciplined crowd. Old Captain

B—— of our Troop K. made the remark that he could "gut the whole outfit" with his own troop. But they got away early, and what a press-agent they had.

The flies began to be a plague by day, and the mosquitoes by night. On the fourth of July, I won a series of foot-races, beating my troop and the squadron selections, but the regimental honour was not contested. This gave me a better standing among the men. . . . Their faces come back to me—German, Irish, Danish, and English—all kneaded by the service into one kind, a thing of low humour, narrow consciousness and sullen hate; all clutched into the distortion of the system, taught by it and by each other that work of any kind is hell—that food, sleep, drink and pay are all that make life.

I was natural in the saddle. We were drilling with sabres in the cool of the dusk one evening, when one of a new lot of horses became unmanageable. The sergeant ordered me to change mounts with the recruit. There was no getting the panicky gelding back to the ranks. Up he went, striking straight out. I felt him topple, tossed the sabre over my shoulder and pushed his neck from me, landed on my feet, and re-mounted as he rose. The added spectacular flourish of it all was from the sabre, quivering hilt up in the sand. I had felt showy throughout. . . . There were thrilling charges by troop on that

Tampa plain—"as fast as the slowest horse," and no slowest horse. But life in the main was hideously slow—slow thoughts, slow actions, stupid words, everywhere the affronting of decency, and the lording it of "pin-head" non-coms. I recall as from another life, K.'s first-sergeant—a dull ruffian named O——, and the little officer-man G—— who held himself a god compared with us, according to his training.

The days blackened with flies in July; earth in the sinks was deep with maggots; horses screamed at the pickets; the Sibley tents at night were an inch deep with flies inside, clinging, crawling more tightly together. The slap of the hand would loose a thousand, but the mass eased over to fill space. The morning sun dried the reek of them on the canvas.

The cook-house was in a cloud; men tortured to madness fought with one another in the mess-line. You could not carry your meat from the bench to the picket-line without living flakes, from the black bank of flies, falling thick upon it; you could not fight them from the morsel that you lifted to your lips. Flies were there to rush into the mouth with it; they were at your eyes and nostril linings. We sat down at the heels of our mounts to eat, as close as we could to the orbit of the tortured beast's tail. And the breeding sunlight came down like a curse.

I have never heard, nor read, nor seen since,

anything like those days; yet I relate but the shadow of the memory. *Shadow*, that recalls the vultures, forever circling above, their shadows moving like ghosts across the sand. . . .

They kept us there in that compounding pestilence, the nation looking over our heads to Cuba, and offering up more patriots momentarily; Washington too turgid and insensible to hear the cry of that which had been ten thousand on the Tampa plain; our officers reflecting a funk that was national. The forces that ruled us, civil and martial, were either stupid or corrupt. We who went out to whip Spain died like flies under their hands. We thought of the sea and the fighting, as one dying of fever thinks of running water. We lay in the sun, waiting for ambulances. In the great heat we covered ourselves with *ponchos* and with canvas of the tent-walls, to keep off the flies. . . . Yet we welcomed every single fiery dawn on that Tampan plain, because of the higher-pitched agony of the nights.

In the late afternoons they came. Even while the flies were settling, we could see the spirals of them in the air, against the background of the dusk—the blood-suckers.

One night I was driven to a blur of agony and illusion. I think that blur must be something like the remnant of consciousness that lives through purgatory. I did not know the men about me—only that they were men. I sat up

on the sand in the moonlight—the air and sand were burning from the day—and men were carrying their blankets to and fro, cursing in a kind of moan, lying down here and there, whimpering. I had a thought—bit a piece from a plug of tobacco, chewed it, and smeared my face and neck with the juice, but the blood-suckers found me through that. I arose and left the troop-street, climbed to the top of a freight-car behind the cook-tent—and they found me. The blur thickened. I had forgotten home. I thought of ships—of transports and sea-winds—thought only of ship's decks and the sea.

For days the ambulance had taken from three to twelve from K.'s troop-street; it was so, over the regiment, over the whole field. I was one of the last quarter for sick-report, one of the very last of my squad. Troop A. had gone to Porto Rico; it was in the air that we were to sail. Vaguely I knew something was wrong with me, but I meant to stick it out until we sailed; all would be well at sea. That was the dream—to lie down on an open deck, where clean air moved, with a cask of water near. . . . I stood through a last roll-call, then broke. I said something to somebody. . . . Somebody ordered me to lie down.

Still I thought of the ship; thought it meant the ship at last when the ambulance came. (It was like a bus full of drunken men.) I remem-

ber the sunlight, a strange tent . . . the orderly telling the surgeon that my fever was a hundred and five. I arose from the ground; explained that we were sailing that night—that I would be all right when we got to sea. They smiled. I made up my mind not to argue with them. They hadn't heard K. was sailing. K. wouldn't go without me. . . .

I was lying in a different tent—listening to the waterfalls. . . . Finally I got all the forces of the world to pull together at once and asked for a drink. Before me was an assistant hospital steward of the regulars. He waved his hand for me to subside. I felt the heat jump within. I asked him again. There was a bag full of peanuts on the table beside him and he held a large bunch of Malaga grapes in his left hand. He was tranced in the delight of the two—a mouthful of peanuts, then a burst of grape, eaten together. He had a fat and greedy face; the look of one who has been very fat as a boy. He had probably looked forward to this hour for a long time. We sick men did not mar his sense of solitude. The big green grapes—they were like the water-falls. Almost it seemed they would quench me. I got my brain and words working together again—to speak to him.

He went on feeding himself.

I hated him as I never hated before nor since. It is almost self-murder to hate as at that mo-

ment. I felt in the blanket roll for my six-shooter. It was not with my things, but there was a lustful vision for a moment as my fingers groped. It would have been delectable to shoot him—to knock him down with the first ball, to watch his eyes as I emptied the cylinder. I would have done it as certainly as we were there together—the rest of the sick men, unconscious. I raised myself to my hips before him and cursed him full-length—as only a cavalryman with imagination can curse a fellow-man. An officer came in before I finished. They gave me drink; I sank back into the red burning.

At last, the train. It must have been the early forenoon, since I was clearly conscious. A string of day-coaches, seats knocked out, three tiers of bunks on either side. The car was full, when I was helped in, but a body was carried forward. . . . They were crying for water, for help, for home. . . . It seemed to me that I was not sick—*that these were sick men.*

It was just this way. Perhaps it saved my life, the sense that came to me, that I should never be like these men—raving, their bodies unwashed and beyond control—the worse than death in the air—the silence in the bunks, July heat of Florida, the following flies, blankets falling down asmear—the hurrying of cans and their passing back—hands out for water—the absence

of all help, when the orderly was in another coach.

It was mysterious. Something said to me: "Quit thinking about yourself. You're all right Look at these. Look at these, and sit tight. Keep a stiff bridle-arm."

I was but one bunk—this was a coach of thirty bunks, in a train, long as a grain freight, and as slow. For a month such trains had gone north. . . . Five hundred miles to Atlanta, forty hours, but they were mostly lapses to me. The orderly who took care of what he could, was earning twenty dollars the month. He helped to carry the dead forward. God pity them, and him, and Washington, and the greedy political men who bulled it all. . . . I wouldn't have stopped to write these things with so much to tell, save that every little while this country of mine talks of making an example of some fighting nation.

14

ATLANTA

THE film of that journey is elided again and again. My body was distressed with foul woollen clothing and ached from the unclean rack in which it lay so long; all senses were poisoned . . . but I awoke to certain heaven.

A tent and heavenly coolness, wooden floor, sight of low hills under the reefed walls, water in glass, cots with sheets and pillows, an orderly undressing me, and gracious God—a woman, washing my face and neck with a cool soapy cloth. She had all the loveliness of this heaven, and I had not seen a white woman in so long. She helped them bathe me swiftly, perfectly, washed my mouth with a clean-tasting solution. The touch of clean cloth to my flesh was exquisite, full-length. She brought a clinking jar. She was beautiful, and moved about her work with the faintest dawn of a smile.

"Open your mouth," she said.

I wanted to ask her something, but had to obey.

She dropped a bit of ice upon my tongue from the clinking jar, with a silver spoon that did not touch my lips. I felt the pillow, the cool air blowing under the canvas; I studied the woman and the low hills. Always when she came near, there was some business with my mouth—drink, temperature-taking, or something like—so that I could not ask her. Long afterward, she paused a moment by her table, pencil to her lips. I managed to beckon. She came with the same faint smile.

"Are you going to be here?"

"Oh, yes. . . . I am relieved at night, but I come back."

"You'll come back?"

"Oh, yes."

I fell asleep, luxurious, happy. There was something more to the incident than is apparent—a danger in it, for I loosed the bridle arm. . . . The crisis came, and I was out of the fight. I had put it all to her that moment; I gave up because she was there. I think in the midst of the deeper energies of her life, where the superb actions are prompted, she knew. She was there to the end. There were many soldiers like me, and the love of them sustains her now, for this sort of love is slow to die.

I saw all the dawns. Fever rose with the day,

and the rest was marked out, until the cool wind and the grey east roused me again. There was no pain. I had that world-old shock of the sick man, suddenly discovering his hand. The brown was nearly gone, and flesh with it.

One morning, the major-surgeon of the post came through with a young doctor. The two paused at different cots, the major pointing out the different phases of typhoid and malaria. They stood before me:

"Here's an example of the typhoid subsiding, and the malaria hanging on," the major said. "We can cope with the latter—a recovery past doubt."

He was beyond considering even the consciousness of an enlisted man. His affront was altogether unstudied. The news was good, though I had been unaware of the closeness of the call. . . . My cot companion to the left was not aroused. I heard the verdict, and didn't believe it. But they were right. He did not rally.

The hunger began; the word "furlough" was in the air. I asked *her* at last. "As soon as you are strong enough to travel," she said. "You are to have a month at home."

It seemed almost impossibly good, but I built to it, and hastened my recovery on the reports. I would hold the temperature bulb between my teeth, inhaling the cool air upon it, and exhaling the warm through my nostrils. Once I brought

them to me with swift concern. I had tricked too well, the bulb showing somewhat below normal. One night in harrowing hunger, I leaned forth from my cot, appropriated several crackers from a box on the table, and drank some stout that was there. Afterward, I lay thralled between the effects of the nourishment, and the fear that the fever would come again; yet somehow, the responsibility for this action did not strike me as exactly my own. The orderly had left the stuff within reach. . . . *She* put me on my mettle, as I left. It would be my fault if relapse came, she said. I must fight hunger for days yet—take as little as I could, as rarely as I could.

"If you don't, you'll spoil it all."

I bade her good-bye, departed—then went back to the tent to look at her once more.

"It's bad luck to say good-bye twice," she said with her faint smile. (I saw her a year afterward in the big division-hospital in Manila. She remembered, but was very busy with other sick men. We could not talk, but a moment. The cots called to her; her eyes frequently turning back to the cots—that God-loved woman.) And now I had to stiffen the bridle-arm again. It seemed important that I live; yet hunger was a devil. I understood the foxes and the wild things. Long days in the train northward, and people were amazingly kind to a soldier. They

brought in food and fruits. It was all in my hands to live or die. I wonder if other men are at their best so—alone. Always it has come to me—a fresh reservoir of strength, with the consciousness of the last resort.

My mother had waited at the station for days. . . . The car was deep in the yard; I could not walk swiftly—another maimed homecoming. She was about to leave when the gateman said that another soldier was in the distance. I saw her face straining toward me. I wondered that her face did not soften; she seemed to be looking directly at me. I was close to her, as one in the same room—I spoke, before she accepted me. She could not form words.

I was so much better than I had been, and so glad to be there, that I forgot how I must look to her—less than ninety pounds present. . . . It was a happy time for us—back in the old house in lower Lincoln; my grandmother still at her seat in the dining-room. I was made over new—all new clean flesh—clean-minded, tractable, without nerves, very easily appealed to. I put back seventy pounds in the next sixty days and learned to smoke again. I might have entered a new life just there, but I was not ready.

The day before leaving to rejoin the troop in Huntsville, Alabama, was Sunday, and the afternoon was spent at the house of the boy I had avoided in high-school days, because of his readi-

ness to pay car-fare. It was the same house of happiness, except that she, who had taken the young professor was home again, and in black. The time passed magically. At supper I told something of the flies by day and the blood-suckers of the Tampan nights. One always knows when some one is listening with a full heart. Her eyes were a-shine with tears. . . . I had to go early, being promised with my mother to church that last night. . . . The younger sister kissed me good-bye and the mother; indeed, the parting with the father and brother was like a bestowal of rare presents. In the midst of it all I was looking into the eyes of Penelope—and she kissed the soldier. Three months afterward, 'way up in the inside hills of Porto Rico, locked tight in a Spanish prison used for cavalry guard-house, I was writing to her—brother.

I had proved a bad soldier. Joining the troop in Huntsville, Alabama, a finish had been put upon the perfection of my health by a series of long rides in sharp November weather among the red rock hills of that good country. We entrained for Savannah and were presently at sea—six hundred horses, as many enlisted men, officers, ship quota, and not a woman—in the old transport *Michigan*. Four or five days out in the still, flashing Caribbean, at mid-day, we struck a spine of the Silver Reef of San Do-

mingo, being thirty or forty miles off our course. There is a shiver in that reminder of Washington and politics.

I had just passed from the galley to the hammock-hold with a mess-tin full of "slum," when the ship heaved and the keel grated. Everything was still on deck; men seemed to hesitate before speaking. . . . We struck again. . . . Yellow patches of the coral spires, rose to the top-water in all directions. Looking down I saw the quick glide of a fish across the shadowy reef which we had just grazed; and at a distance, a shark's fin knifing the glazy surface. Men moved with queer stealth down into the hold and armed themselves. There was no woman. These landsmen would fight for the boats; the officer-and-man business would break once and for all out here at sea. Groups gathered and augmented about the boats: one man steadily whetted his knife on his canvas legging; another was reading intently from a paper-covered book.

The ship was moving as one through an unfamiliar dark room. There was no leak; the day was at its height, and the sea was calm. A sailor aloft to the very tip of the foremast marked out the passage through the yellow patches. I do not recall a single military order being given in those two hours. For many moments the hope would rise; and then the coral would draw along the submerged plates like a low appraising hand.

At four we had been clear some time, but not until night-fall did the ship put on any speed. It was a worth-while afternoon; certain mysteries and pictures from it unfolded afterward.

The hold of the horses was a hell. They had been vilely shipped; stood knee-deep now in the simmering manure; the hoisting gear creaked continually, lifting out the fallen and dropping them into the sea. They were watched by a running guard of quick reliefs, for men could not long endure the heat and that air, blinding with ammonia. The sight of the hideously swollen legs of the horses was crippling to me. . . . We touched Ponce, and sailed around to Mayaguez, where we unshipped in the torrid light and rode the poor beasts into the sea. . . . I remember the native girls coming down to the shore in the early evening, and calling "adios" to us as they passed. I tasted rum that night—*ron blanco* washed with the milk of cocoa-nuts.

15

MANATI

A TROPICAL Island appeals to me as Paris to many men; and such a fairy isle is this—of miniature mountain ranges, deep-shaded and deep-running gorges, towering white cliffs, laughing brown maidens, valleys hushed, vernal, scented with fruit, oranges growing wild and free as water, the stride of torrential showers from hill to hill, sunlight afterward laughing everywhere—men only to break the dream. I can see the natives goading the ox-spans with the long steel-shod poles, and troopers lording it over the native, on the matter of colour. Poor fellows, they had little chance for inflation. They but reflected the system that had brutalised them. Wherever the under-white of a caste-arrangement is turned loose, there you will find a lordly beater of the black.

I was left in Manati with a detachment of ten men, while the main body of the troop went on to make headquarters in Ciales, eight miles

higher in the hills. Howard, the sergeant in charge, made me cook of the little outfit, and the men remarked flavour and finish. My mother had taught me. I crisped the bacon, browned the beans, and carried out ideas of coffee-making that I had long known to be superior to those used in the troop. Then we had fruits and vegetables; it was only a matter of garlic, cold boiled potatoes, an armful of green leaves and three or four cans of salmon to make a mountain salad.

Meanwhile the quantity of colourful letters sent to my newspaper, including the story of striking the reef off Santo Domingo, had begun to tell in a small way in Detroit. Money came to me.

Now, for two cents in Manati, you could buy an inch or two of *ron blanco* in the bottom of your quart-cup; a handful of brown sugar may be had in any door-way of that tall-cane country; juice of orange pressed upon the sugar and rum, makes a man forget how swiftly he is admitting the devil. I didn't miss any meals, but the *pueblo* charmed me between times and afterhours. It would have been all right, except for Sergeant Howard who wasn't drinking, and he was a mean man "up the pole." One evening as the kitchen police gathered up the pots and pans, Howard informed me that there was to be a running-guard to watch the stores; that my

trick was between eleven and twelve. I suggested that it was usual for the cook to be exempted from guard-duty. He repeated his orders. At eleven that night I was in the *pueblo*, speaking Spanish as I have never been able to do since. There was a little toy of a native maiden who put an enchantment upon the teaching. (I hadn't seen her face except in faintest starlight.)

A corporal and two others came for me. I bade them bide and listen, offering rum, oranges and the sugar basket. They tarried until Howard came himself.

I assured the sergeant that there would be no hitch in the preparation of breakfast, suggesting that he couldn't have been serious in asking a cook to do guard-duty. No humour lived in that man. He ordered me to camp. I refused. He bade the corporal and pair take me, and the fight was on. On her door-step, too.

It must have been strange to one not understanding our parley—to see four men suddenly leap at each other. Sergeant Howard, however, made sure of his order being carried out, by dropping the butt-end of his six-shooter upon my crown. I awoke in the Spanish prison at Manati in a stone cell with thick mahogany bars, opening into a court, which I describe from an old story:

". . . The small stone-paved plaza was sur-

rounded by cells like mine, dark and dirty and depressing. There was a well in the centre of this prison-yard, and when one walked across the flagging, his footsteps sounded with cavernous reverberations through the black water-chamber below. The entrance to the plaza was a big iron gate, opened in the day time and guarded by the native policemen. At sunset the prisoners were locked in the cells and the plaza was left untenanted, save by stray ponies and pallid moon-bars."

The native officer unlocked my cell in the early morning and allowed me the freedom of the plaza. There was money in my pockets. Half-jokingly, I sent out for a cup of wine. The fact that it was brought altered my future. Howard appeared later. Everything would be forgotten, said he, if I would go back and stay in camp. I had drunk the wine; the night before was rekindled. There was shade here, and many strange studies. I had money; I could write; the Porto Rican policemen were promising. I told Howard I'd do the cooking; but wouldn't do guard and wouldn't stay in camp between times. He went away. Rations were brought from the troop; my canteen and other matters. I sent the canteen out for *vinto tinto* and it came back full. I now had paper, pencils and much work to do; under the eaves of the cells.

"A woman walked slowly through the iron

gate at the prison entrance. She was smileless, hungry-eyed and silent. A large tin-can was balanced upon her head. Her fleshless figure was marked with none of the curves of a woman. Her feet were bare; her movements slow and painful. Slowly and painfully at the well, she filled her jar. The descending chain made a weird cavernous rumble as it whipped against the slimy stone-wall of the vault. Kneeling upon the flaggings, she placed the can upon her head and was gone."

It was like taking photographs—to do these paragraphs. Twelve or fifteen times each day the water-carrier came. It made me feel better to work. I always lost the cramp of externals, when work was coming well. . . . Then there was Tad. . . . "Tad had the eyes of the woman who sat at the door of the last cell to the right where the stocks stood. His arms were like any other baby boy's, but if there ever was a voice in his throat, it was not used while I was there. His head held some kind of a brain; you could tell that by his eyes, but Tad never learned to smile. He studied me from head to foot, when I first became his fellow-convict. A garment hung about him, and about the garment hung the same odour that raped my nostrils when I ventured too close to the woman sitting at the entrance to the last cell—half-hidden behind her gaunt knees. Her lips, her breastless figure

never moved, but everywhere her eyes followed the baby. They were filled, as if with the crime of *his* life; they were bright with the staring brightness of fever. Had they shone from a skull wrapped in brown paper, they could not have made you shudder more."

I find in this old story, too, my terrors of the night after my cell was locked:

"Did you ever hear a cat step on dry brittle leaves? It is just such a sound as this that a multitude of cockroaches make, dragging their heavy abdomens across a stone floor. It will keep you awake. You will sit erect, and things will become distorted in your mind, eyelids stretched wide apart, darkness shadowy and moving. The shrill snarling 'peak, peak' of ravenous rats can be borne, but the clicking rattle of the cockroach hordes is maddening. If you shut your eyes, spiders will dangle before you. A stronge pipe will soothe some."

And finally:

"The fleshless form of the water-woman swung slowly through the iron gate. She filled her jar, knelt and was gone. . . . The sight and presence of Tad sickened me. I placed a tin plate of bacon and potatoes upon the flagging and shoved it to him. He took a potato in his two hands; it was slowly absorbed like a process of unction. . . . He was hourly decreasing the interval between us, so I had to wash him. I cut

down an army under-shirt into a sort of ulster for him. He watched me soberly. I rolled up my sleeves, put an extra charge into my pipe and recklessly cut off Tad's garment, so crowded with associations. . . . I had recently helped to perform the last rites over the body of a government mule, four days gone from the glanders. Pictures of that task rushed through my mind now. . . . I ascertained why Tad's slate-covered hair grew in patches. With a half-box of matches I succeeded in reducing his former garment to ashes—then turned again to the bare babe.

"I can hardly express the shock. With averted face I beckoned to one of the convict women, and gave directions at a modest distance. Tad was allowed to dry in the sun. *She* was shiny and rose-touched through the brown, after the scrubbing with government bouquet."

The second or third day I noted a little native maiden at the iron gate, smiling and waving at me. When she spoke, I knew it was she, who had made Spanish so easy. I gave her something to get a new dress. They no longer locked me in the cell at night; but the troop did not know. Finally after "taps" sounded, the native policemen permitted me to wander forth for a little while in the nights. I was careful not to get them into trouble, and grateful, too.

I cannot reckon how long I was there, not

more than four weeks. From a Kentucky volunteer outfit, a certain Bill McKinley came to the lock. He had rum-madness, but that was a man. We talked by the well-curbing through the nights. He told me one night of a Kentucky girl, and I fell to thinking of that last afternoon at home, of the sad eyes that had listened. I wrote to her brother when the morning came.

Now, I heard from the soldier who brought my food, that Howard grouched hours over my case, that trouble was ahead. I wrote to O. C., then a Washington correspondent, to get me out of the service if he could. Howard was finally relieved by the troop from Manati service, and detached a pair of sentries to conduct me. I was not allowed my mount, but given a mule for the ride to Ciales. There are eleven fords in that eight miles; a sentry with drawn carbine rode on either side. A rather effective entrance, as prisoner, was made at headquarters.

. . . Prison again, and no plaza, a place of smallpox, vermin and darkness; no joke about this, and hate filled me. . . . The private who brought food reported that a native woman had come up the trail wet from the fords, and had been watching in front for two days. Nine or ten feet up the wall was the one opening, the single source of light, six inches square. After the private left, I up-turned the cot, climbed upon it to look out. The little teacher again.

I tossed her a present, bade her go home—that I would come. She set me thinking. The dark solitude was a vicious pressure. . . .

Into this darkness came a letter from Detroit written by the managing editor of the rival afternoon paper. He inquired if I would care to shake the service and go to work for him. The fury of my hope was hard to endure; and there was much for me, in this neat proof that my work was being read at home. I wrote back, and kept the secret. So another effort was added to O. C.'s, for my discharge.

They began to use me at this time to dig the sinks for the troop; heavy work, because the top-soil was solid root-tangle. One day, a lamentable recruit, assigned as my guard, made me desperate. He wanted to desert, but was afraid; tried to persuade me to go with him; sat, carbine across his knees, upon the dirt which I tossed out, and whined the hours away. My wrist was becoming interestingly lame. It occurred to me to end this business. I whacked the heavy pick around the sides of the hole, with the lame hand, while the sentry was staring away through the hills toward the sea. A painful swelling arose at once. I was escorted to the troop; the doctor ordered me to quarters there. This was clear gain, for I had expected the black hole again.

At this time the troop was at its worst. We

were quartered in an old banana-house; life was lazy and warm. The longer in the service the more the soldier sleeps; naps in the morning, naps in the afternoon; early to bed, and the look of being led to slaughter, when *reveille* sounds in the morning. These processes of deterioration are so much more subtle and demoralising than prodigal expenditure of life-force; this slow-going is a pace that kills. I was shocked to find that the troop, as a whole, regarded me as depraved. I yearned to be with Bill McKinley, a real human; I lay plotting and full of hate; dared not let my thoughts actually reach the possibility of discharge—but this unformed hope was the sustainer of life.

Daily I had looked for the announcement of my court-martial. I had resisted arrest, proved insubordinate, had not appeared for guard duty—these were the surface of the charges against me. Still I was held without action. Captain B. had fallen into the rum, and could not get up. For weeks he had lain, an orderly serving drinks until he slept, in a native house in Ciales, remote from the quartered-troop. Certain papers were necessary to accompany me to San Juan for court-martial; the old man had not the faculties to gather these together.

Neither did they send me to the black hole, when my wrist healed. Keiber, the new top-sergeant, showed an inclination to let me work back

into the troop. I see now that the charges pending would have been dropped, had my conduct been pure white on that informal parole. The kitchen policing was given me. Ten days elapsed, and I was very full of strength.

Work was done for the day; I fell to thinking of Manati. There was left two hours of daylight, and no call to answer until *reveille*. All troop forms were hurried through so the men could get back to bed. Miles away through a rift in the mountains, I could see the Caribbean. The sun was sinking into the sea. The eastern ridges were beginning to be shadowy. I spoke to another soldier of Manati. We went down the trail to the first ford, and he backed out. I asked him to toss a penny to see if I should go alone. The decision was against the adventure.

"Toss it again," said I.

It was my way, and I left him. Sixteen mountain miles, twenty-two fords, and I must be back in my bunk at dawn. Government mules had been carried away lifeless, because they struck the rivers at the wrong place. These mules are not without a number of kicks. . . . I made the first four fords in the twilight; the moon came up. The fifth and sixth crossings on the way were the bad ones—the sixth and seventh coming back. The fight that these two gave me, made me wonder what I should do without moon-

light. . . . They laughed in Manati, at the wet man drinking rum and *anise*. The little native girl laughed.

Toward midnight, there was a rain-shower and the moon was lost. I started back, magnetised to headquarters by the fear of failing to reach my bunk for first-call. A pair of Porto Rican shoes had begun to grind early on the journey. . . . Breast-deep in the fifth ford I felt weakness for the first time. Rain-drops splashed against my face as I strained against the pressure of the current. The moon had glowed for a moment in the midst of black moving streaks of cloud, but had not come forth. The next crossing was the ugly one. The trail down to the water's edge was slippery from the rain. Blackness was unbroken now. I could not see where the cliffs ended and the sky began, nor half-way across the angry river, but I could hear its rapid monotone, and see the foam.

My strength seemed uncertain. Every time I raised my foot, it was harder to get it back, before toppling. A rolling stone, and the current whirled me. Ten minutes of pure battle before I touched the opposite bank; nor could I tell how far I had been carried down in making the swim. All was black above, as I lay panting on the stones. In the mile to the seventh ford, I must have wandered from the trail, for I had hardly entered, before deep water closed in. The fight

was on again. I battled in the crossing until there was red before my eyes and my lungs seemed full of blood. The thing that made the battle so dreadful, was the thought that I would be no good if I did reach shore; that I was broken and a-leak inside. Yet commanding all, (and I met this fellow again in another narrow escape from drowning,) was a beyond-will, a beyond-vitality, that the body obeyed automatically, after man-force was exhausted.

When I recovered consciousness on the bank, I could not find the trail. All was strange. I crawled along the river edges feeling the stones—for those ground smooth by the tires of the wagon-trains. I must have groped for an hour, back and forth; and at last determined to go in one direction until something happened. This determination brought me finally to a wire fence. A dog barked.

The whole trail between the towns was a wild glory in sunlight; I did not recall fence or house, but now a wooden shutter slid open. In the candle-light a fat Spaniard stood, holding a musket. We parleyed; I was asked to enter. He was frightened at first, but his woman raked up the coals of the fire and made coffee. I asked to be shown the trail to Ciales. The Spaniard waved his hand before my eyes, took my wet clothes, and gave me a dry suit with girth to enclose a

troop horse. I asked for the trail to Ciales, but he brought me coffee, rich in flavour as it was mighty in body; swung a hammock by the fire, and bent me to it in his huge arms. Then he lit a cigar at the candle, smoked it into brisk burning, silenced further petitions, by placing it in my mouth. . . . I thought I made him understand that I must only rest an hour, that I would be hung and shot and quartered—if I did not reach Ciales before *reveille*. I awoke with the dawn coming in, the cigar in its first ash, between my fingers. . . . My body felt beaten, my feet swollen and feverish, so I had to crush them into the native shoes. He would not let me go, until I drank more coffee. From the window he pointed toward the sun, and beyond his palm-groves, rose my trail.

I thought of the troop, the squalor of it. I tried to make the Spaniard see, (though I was going to hell for it,) how much I thanked him and loved his kindness. . . . I had missed the trail the night before by a quarter of a mile. A half hour of running and Ciales stood out upon its cliffs a mile away. Yellow and rose were in the flood of morning. Over the rocks and hills was borne the first call a soldier hears:

"I can't get 'em up,
I can't get 'em up,
I can't get 'em up in the mo-rn-ning——"

The troop was formed for *reveille*, when I slipped into ranks. . Keiber saw it all, led me to Captain B——, who still lay sprawled and inflamed, wearing a grey beard I had not seen before. The stuff that he said to me was like him—words, grunted and snarled; words, pig-like and nasty. . . . The black hole again. I slept from five in the morning until darkness—slept in that place of vermin and *la vireula*. . . . A soldier stole in to see me late in the night—a "bob-tail," a bad man who shot a native afterward, and who is either dead or in military prison now. This ruffian, so rhythmically evil that one was not safe with him, had forced his way past the native *policia* and brought me rum and cakes, while the tired troop slept.

16

UNION SQUARE

KEIBER finally sent for me. I did not dare to ask, nor think. I searched his face; he searched mine. We passed through the bunk-house. Grooming was over; many of the soldiers were back to bed. Keiber walked before me to the troop-clerk. Papers were there on the field-box that concerned me. The two men spoke of San Juan. . . . If it meant court-martial, and I were convicted—there could be no two ways to that—any order for my discharge would be invalid.

Keiber took the papers, and led me to the Captain's quarters. The old man had turned white—the red pig gone from him. Old and pitiable and trembly he was, trying to climb out of the rum. I thought of him, of the reputation he had won long ago, "B——, the best pistol shot in the army." What a sound that had, when I first joined the troop. He glanced at me, bared his yellow teeth, breathed on a dry palate. . . . Were these the papers that would send me to

San Juan for court-martial? Would he be strong enough to sign them? A table was brought to his cot. The orderly raised him. The Captain's hand was stubby, short-fingered, very shaky. The pen was inked for him. He wrote one short word, then his name, then called for a drink. I read the result upside down standing there. It was large and slanted downward on the sheet:

B
A
D

Such was my army character; inscribed by my Captain. On the back of the document was written, according to regulations since I had not been tried:

Discharge: Honourable
Service: Honest and Faithful
Court-martials: None

Such was my discharge—a lie on both sides, ludicrous and contemptible as every last one of the army systems.

I swallowed. I had suddenly become afraid for my life. I said, "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," to Sergeant Keiber and the troop-clerk, with a respect that they had never won from me before. I gathered up my duffle without words. It seemed that I was in danger of death, before I

could get away from the troop; that something would happen to make me remain; that I would be locked up again; that something would be told about me that would break the authority of the papers; that I was insane and these *were* court-martial papers and not my discharge order. . . . O——, the old top-sergeant watched me, smoking his pipe. Howard was there taking his ease. I gave the former the opportunity to refuse to shake hands with me, but did not press further. I passed out—not big enough to pity them—hating them, as they stood and stared, or stared at me from their bunks—all in a black grouch because I was free. I had suddenly risen above them all—from the lowest place to the highest—from the last to the first. I seemed to see poor old B—— as from an eagle's height, and all the army, and the Island. . . . I moved down the trail in the morning, ran a little, expecting a shout, even a shot in the back—ran down to the first ford.

An ox-team was making the crossing. The pair seemed hardly to move in the butting current. I learned from them that one must move slowly in a swift ford—to go slow that was my agony, with Ciales still in view, sitting upon her white cliff. I walked ahead in the passage between the rivers, but waited for the oxen at the ford; looked at my papers again, and at the wild glory of the Island. There was an order for

ninety-seven dollars—finals and savings on clothing—to be cashed in San Juan. I had not noticed this before.

In Manati they told me that the little native teacher had gone on to San Juan; but Bill McKinley was there. With great effort, he borrowed a dollar from his Captain, to pay my train-fare to San Juan . . . a first-magnitude man, not taking a drink that day. He helped me to the train.

That night in *El Capitol*, I found Marie of Manati. I was beginning to dare to believe. My day of happiness rose in that night to incomparable zenith. Next day they gave me the money and passage to New York on the transport *Berlin*, not yet in the harbour.

I would ramble with Marie, sometimes in the night, sometimes in the day. Five days and nights of strange dream, and with every deeper touch of consciousness, I met the exultation of freedom. Once Marie tried to rob me. The people she lived with had forced her to it; she was just the same afterward. . . . I would sit under a certain awning at the water-front, drinking wine and lemon, to cool my throat after adventures in the city. Marie left me down there the last morning, before the city was awake—went up the street crying like a little child. I remember sitting on a big brass cannon there, as the day came up. . . . Marie came back a last

time. She wanted to go on the ship with me. . . .

Blue Peter was flying, but we did not sail until afternoon. I remember sleeping somewhere, waking up with a start to find the ship still there . . . buying a hamper of bottles, and hiring a boat to take me out into the harbour. . . . They gave me a hammock. I recall the heat, the daylight burning at the ports—the white seawall of San Juan, a last time. I awoke in the cool night, found a drink or two in my hammock—the rest was gone. I staggered up on the deck in the purity, stood there breathing; and it seemed living God was in that starry night. Five days in *El Capitol*, and I had not sent Bill McKinley his dollar. He died down there.

I was about broken physically. The ship-surgeon told me a minor operation was necessary; that he would perform it after we left Santiago. The day we lay in that sharky Cuban harbour, was the hottest I have ever seen in this world. Decks blistered. The town and the hills behind where the fighting was, the yellow-fever quarantine sprawled to the left, and the winding passage to *Moro*—were all strange and dreary through films of heat. I watched the sharks feeding in the harbour.

The anchor lifted; the surgeon sent for me. No anæsthetic was wasted on my account, and there was a two-inch incision. The pain sur-

prised me; it was incredible. They carried me to a hammock, saying I would heal as soon as we reached the coolness. It was exactly so. We struck a gale off Hatteras, a winter gale, magnificence in it for me. It is associated with my twenty-first birthday and I was able to walk.

Just seven dollars left. The fare was thirteen dollars from New York to Detroit. I staked a five dollar goldpiece twice at a chuck-a-luck game in the hold of the *Berlin*, and won both times.

We reached New York in an evening of bitter cold. Four or five of us from the ship were still together. The soldier habit makes a man shrink from being alone. An old cavalry horse often dies shortly after being condemned from the picket line.

The fact that the promotion of individuality is the aim of creation; that a man can only rise from the herd by getting alone; that a man any good anywhere is at his best alone;—these things are but additional human violations of the army system. A system fundamentally evil, is bad full length, bad in all its ramifications. . . . We drank a bit, where the beer-glasses were large. Our aim was Bleecker Street, one of the Mills hotels. All war-zeal had long since been drained out of the city; we were held in as much regard, as any uniformed gang deserves.

High upon a building, in the night-light, as we

crossed Union Square, I saw the sign of an old and worthy magazine in large gilt letters. . . . I had cut pictures out of old copies of that magazine at the dining-room table, before kilts were discarded; and pasted the pictures of authors, cut from its advertising pages, in a book. I had looked to that magazine for all that was high and finished in literary value; the names of writers appearing there even once, were as far from me in greatness, as I had been beneath the generals of the army, according to the military plan. No aspiration of mine had ever yet reached that market; indeed, my voice would have broken had I ventured to ask the editorial-floor from the elevator man. . . . I looked in the entrance as we passed. I had no business there; and yet in the womb of work—far from virgin even then—a child had leaped at that sign.

It was still standing a few weeks ago. From a luncheon table in an upper room in Sixteenth Street, I saw it again. That winter night came back, and our asking the way to Bleecker Street. . . . It was something the same when I first entered the newspaper office in Detroit, heard the presses throbbing below, and smelled the inimitable atmosphere. These are rare generative moments—in spite of the pitifulness of them—when a boy first beholds his arena, decked in the panoply of illusion. . . . I have entered

that door in Union Square since, passed through the hall; I have told my business to the office-boy of an upper floor—even in the office of the editor.

17

PENELOPE

IT was dear O. C. who had extracted me from the service. The managing-editor of the rival paper in Detroit gave me a position at once. I lasted six weeks, doing short stories, together with the usual reportorial work. This managing-editor was not of my sort; I have often marvelled at the extraordinary impulse he must have followed in writing the letter that gave me such joy in Porto Rico. It was unlike all the rest of him that I came to know. He gave me the Police Court, not for news-bulletins as in Cincinnati, but for feature stories.

The sixth week, an old friend was gathered into court. Abroad, the night before, zero weather, wrapped in a horse-blanket, he had talked a different language from the policeman who made the arrest. I knew the man's history. He was one of the products of the municipal depression which encircled lower Lincoln. I

wrote around him that morning "The Downfall of a Good Fellow." Personally he was very proud of it afterward, and showed it about the bars. Not so, the managing-editor.

I came into the office in the afternoon. Just as I opened a fresh paper, and was glancing through the story and the illustrations, the city-editor called me:

"For God's sake, get your money and get out of here. I suppose, I'm a goner, too—"

"What's the matter?"

"Why, the old man won't dare to go home. This 'Downfall' chap of yours, is his brother-in-law—"

I was too crushed to remark that I had merely written the story; that it wasn't my business if it got in; that a man should watch his own paper when his relatives get into Police Court. . . . I have never been able to understand. The managing-editor never forgave me. Ten years afterward, my first novel appeared. He was still on the paper, and no review of the story could run until he retired, eight months later.

Spring was breaking again—that spring of '99. Since the death of my father, we had gone back to live at the old house in lower Lincoln. I sunk into the wonderful country of story production. This alone mitigated the misfortune at the newspaper. The city-editor had said to me, "A man who can write your kind of stories, doesn't need

a newspaper job." . . . I had my pipe and tobacco-jar, and an upper room.

Those early tales of the troop were done at a sweep, at a sitting, as newspaper stories are done. Begun in Tampa, with the regular newspaper-letter work, the first finishings were made during furlough. Many settings were formed in the prison at Manati, but that was not the place to see a full story. The emotions of production seemed now to gather in full. Certain hours, the pictures ran out of me—of themselves—fulfilling an ideal of greatness and happiness. I have sometimes thought of these stories as an ebullition from a past life, left-overs from another pack which one uses, while he finds himself.

I shall never forget the sense of writing something that I had not known; of seeing a sentence before me, wrought of raw emotional fire, yet containing a fact, which I had not learned in this life. I never weary of pondering this, nor of encountering it; of touching the mystery within, the wiser worker within. There was less brain and sham about those stories than characterised hundreds done afterward; they were better as a whole than many groups of tales during the next seven years.

I had not studied; had not begun to strain, had not been pulled out of myself, by the work of other men. I had my regular army men, my Porto Rico, Tampa, horses, and the stories told

in the troop; I had my transports; darkey boys that laughed with us through the south; my own fevers, abuses, nurses, sufferings, homesickness, and more than anything my own hatreds. I see now that the biggest thing that had happened, was my insubordination as a soldier. I had gone blind in the pressure of abominations. It wasn't rum; at least, that only fixed my desperation. I had tried to fight the system that crushed me at every breath. I had known moments of strange readiness to fight the army, the whole army, until I died. I was only altered and afraid, when the order for my discharge took effect in the troop. I had been ready to die—just to maim a claw of that outfit. Such hatred made the best stories of the lot.

Of education, you know what a farce that was, except the Greek. Kipling might have touched me a bit; he did later; but my head was not full of literary ideals, and I knew not a single literary man.

These were my stories—that was the incredible thing. I remember one that would not let me go—though it was long and I was exhausted, almost incoherent with it. The effects appeared ahead, one after another, in their inevitability, with that cohering line that I lost afterward for years at a time. There was ecstasy in this production. I used darkey-talk without study; built the whole fight at San Juan hill from the

glimpse I had from Santiago harbour that hot day before the operation. It was the best of the group and sold to a decent magazine some weeks afterward for forty dollars. I remember working on it all day—long-hand—until late, and then reading it to my mother and grandmother and aunt in the same old dining-room below, my voice breaking at the climax, because it had come so true and fast and to me.

My mother loved it; my grandmother nodded; my aunt said it was better than I had done before—splendid from her. She would tell others what promise was in my work; to others, she would think of me as a boy just beginning, but to me she would say what she thought, according to her best standards. It hurt, often like a whip at the time, but she did me much good through those years. Sane and critical, especially if I touched a woman in a story; (extra-especially if I were not brisk about it,) she would burn me. Moments, I hated her position—but always, I wanted her word.

The brain of a real worker is but the machine upon which his product is played. The brain lowers the vibration, synthesises the pictures, so that others can see. A man's brain is the product of his time and place; it interprets for his hour. I had not begun to use brain in these early tales. Mine was obedient, as a recruit in the army is obedient, because it knew so little and was over-

awed. When the brain began to learn its importance, began to be coloured with the thoughts of others, and to be struck with the methods of others,—naturally the ebullition of the real self was betrayed. My work, not being purely my own for years afterward, was inferior to these early passions of expression.

Brain is the crown-part of the animal that rebels, when a man seeks to climb out of the herd into individuality. I have sometimes thought that every physical force of the body is hostile to the production of real work. The stomach demands food and drink and stimulus; the pleasure idea obtrudes, all that is fleshly is against one; and the devil of it is, when you do drive decently through these ordeals of opposition, and perform comparatively well a fair task, (your own inimitable hall-mark showing here and there,) the brain and all the other forces of flesh, rise up saying "We did it." This is identifying one's self emotionally with one's work, and it must stop before the work is free from taint. All the lower forces of self must be conquered, before man is at his best.

I was very far from such conquest. The only value of this first work, was my brain innocence. It had not felt itself, and did not obstruct, other than through its very small calibre, the pictures so gripping to me. . . . However, you cannot shoot a twelve-inch shell through an eight-inch

bore; neither can you express a man's soul through a boy's brain. So the brain must be brought up to comparable form; this is the long slow road. Brain-products on the way are not pure. They come into the world inherent with a sickness that begins to disintegrate them at once, as flesh begins to die as soon as it is conceived. Before I had finished the sheaf of seventeen tales, (which made a volume, long since out of print,) my work had fallen down.

There was much that was reasonable about the next few months at home. My interests were up-town. My mother was startled at the proportion of the forty dollars which I gave her. The Sunday papers were using some of my work; life was simple, work engrossed me, and there were evenings with Penelope in the house of happiness. She was all that I had never known. In my house we were all individuals with hard edges that ground upon one another. This of hers was all a family, pulling together, very much one. Penelope was the one of all, superbly unselfish. She spoiled me; gave too much. I was far from being fine enough, not to get accustomed to this unsearchable source of kindness. There was something of the oriental about her—in submission, service, and adjustment of self to the male mood.

The man whom she had married was a much better man than I, but he had not brought out the

splendid things in her. He had been kind; he had adored her; his life was clean. Her life was smothered with him, though she did not know it, because she could not live her ordained part.

She was mother, every inch. Her first tears at that memorable supper had been for the boy afield, suffering and unmothered. In all that had to do with motherhood, she was genius. Against her will, against all that she knew with her mind, this nature of hers seized upon me, as upon a life-work. Since she gave so much, I gave little; but I came to need her insistently. Her older brother heard of the affair of my first departure, and undertook to end our story. Penelope mothered me through that, as through the other fevers. She told him that she preferred a man who had finished with such things before he really took a woman. I have had many years to think of that summer, and yet I have never come to the end of the wonder of Penelope's giving. One evening, before it was quite dark, she whistled me to come upstairs. I kissed her cheek, and as she turned on the light, I noted that the other cheek had a tiny bruise upon it.

"What's that green mark?" I asked.

"It's envy," she said. . . .

One day that summer, I went to a certain downtown room. The woman of the strawberries was there, desperately ill. Her lips were dry and hot, her face contorted with pain. She

needed some money. I went away, saying that I would try to get it. I never saw her again. She was taken that day to a place where I could not go. She lived but a few hours. . . . Always after the great stresses, I have written a book. Hers was written. It was the first, and was meant for destruction. Perhaps that is the reason that she came to life in a chapter many years later. . . . "There was just a glimpse of light hair, a red-lipped profile and slow shining dark eyes. She was not even like Adelaide, but a blood sister in temperament. Bedient saw this in her hands, wrists, lips and skin, in the pure elemental passion which came from her every tone and motion. One of the insatiate—yet frail and lovely and scented like a carnation; a white flower, red-tipped—sublimate of earth perfume . . . one of those desert-women who love so fiercely and so fruitlessly; whose relations with men who do not weave, but only bind the selvage of the human fabric."

The magazine that purchased the best of the trooper tales, was the property of the house that published the sheaf of stories in a volume. Between the two, I was advanced enough money to take me to the Philippines. I arranged to supply war-letters to a group of newspapers, of which my old paper in Detroit, was the nucleus.

There was drinking in those last days before leaving to sail from Vancouver, but I had prom-

ised to go through the whole campaign dry, and my mother and Penelope stood out in all greatness on their separate hills. . . . I awoke very ill, in a Pullman berth that was hard and lumpy with flasks, presented during the last hours of the night before. All were consigned the next morning to the porter, and I was full of natural vim again before we crossed the Rockies. Several weeks later, after a day of skirmish fighting with General McArthur, north of Manila, I lay down to sleep in the same room with General Joe Wheeler. It struck me with a force never to be forgotten, that I, the same creature, less than a year before, had dug sinks, and had been considered depraved by the enlisted men of the regular army. The sham of it all held me fast. . . .

18

LUZON

MANILA was like a steam-room when I arrived. Quarters were found at San Pedro Macati, with a volunteer outfit, largely recruited from Michigan, Illinois and Indiana, my especial newspaper district. The Colonel was good to me, but evinced a desire to read copy before it was sent. I left his mess in good nature, and found a comfortable bunk among his soldiers in Manila, near San Sebastian cathedral, where the regimental quartermaster held forth. I liked the boys there, and one Baum, a corporal, sometime cook, was brother and sister to me.

I wrote several columns each day when not in the field. Baum would make coffee late at night. We had a little monkey named Hooligan —its face the saddest and most ancient in the world—as if it had seen the death of all the Saviours, and had wept with all the Marys. Hooligan was tortured with incessant fears—fears of the dark like a baby. He saw things

not for our eyes, and cried and cried. His only peace was from the magnetism of men. A hand of Baum's or mine would quiet him—as men are quieted from the source of strength.

Northward the skirmishes were on—Angeles, San Fernando, Tarlac, and there I saw my first war correspondents. Generals had ceased to dismay me, but here were great men, indeed. They moved for my eyes in a daze of colour and action and light. Quite as interested in them as in the fighting, my gaze was like a lens, the shutter popping continually. When I looked up from a volley, and saw that a certain John T. had not sprawled, but instead, had photographed the line of white from the native rifles—a hero was conceived, in all truth.

I was still lost in the illusions of service. Fighting looked to me a thing for men; yet riding with officers, I had an understanding of the ranks, that was not developed elsewhere. There was much in my mind, that I did not see clearly enough to express at that time, but I saw that it was impossible for an officer even to approach the point of view of the enlisted man; that his attitude was only a little less impertinent when he tried to.

One morning soon after dawn, I had coffee started, when the cavalry rode through the camp, to take brigade lead for the day. This was during the first week of a large expedition into the

southern provinces. The horsemen whisked me after them; in fact, I was in the saddle and part of the column, by the time the third troop had passed—and they moved fast that red morning. Perhaps I looked back at the breakfast fire, but the first realisation concerned my pony, worn from the previous days. I was chucking him under the chin, so to speak, before the sun was a burden.

Silang and Indang, sizeable native towns, we entered at a gallop and "raise pistol," only to find them empty save for the sick, the lame and pariah-dogs that barked in the dust. In spite of the speed, we could not catch up with the signalling belfries that warned the *barrios* ahead of the American raid. The day had flamed up; the long waning was begun, without a halt for food. Where the trails were thick with jungle, we met the fire from ensconced native parties. I was worn back by mid-afternoon to the last troop, the white horse outfit, whose captain was admirably designed to preserve the illusions of a boy.

Lean, dark, quiet, I can see Don. C. now, as in those shadowy ravines beyond Indang, rolling a cigarette with his free hand, sending the report ahead that his outfit could not keep up longer with the main body. His men and mounts had seen service during the several preceding days as I had, while the rest of the regiment was fresh. He talked very little and so quietly. Weeks

afield had sieved his troop down to the gold—thirty-five or forty men—hard and light and cold-nerved. Their faces were sun-blackened; their arms and backs blackened through rents and rips, for there had been no issue of army shirts in many weeks; the horses were bony and fit, just a bit over-spent this day. It was a perfect parcel of brutes that I was proud to ride with.

Just a little before dark, we came to a native pony tied at the edge of the trail, deep jungle on either side. I leaped down to his head, thinking my problem finished—a change of saddle and bridle to this fresh sorrel stud. He was picketed with heavy wire, seemingly plaited around his throat. I started to follow the wire into the bamboo, in the hope the other end would open more easily. Captain Don caught me by the collar, and yanked me back into the saddle. . . . He let me think it out, as we rode on. Of course it was a bolo-trap—I, to follow the wire into the native knives. . . . A man had stopped to recinch his mount this day, not fifty yards back. The troop heard his cry; found him pinned to the trail, through mouth and brain, by a long knife. So quickly was it done.

Don wanted to overtake the regiment that night. Darkness was about us and firing, a wound or two in our outfit; yet the fast trail of the forward troops was still hammered in the sand. We had been twelve hours in the sad-

dle; my spur was gone; I was prodding the pony forward with a broken pencil; coffee was a beyond-earth dream.

The moon came up brilliantly. We reached the rim of a deep ravine, the bamboo bridge of which had been partly torn away by the natives, since the main body of the cavalry passed. Here the white horse troop came to a halt, as the hidden natives intended. They must have been low on ammunition about this time. We were clumped and quiet, yet their firing was thin and wide.

You could have read a newspaper in that moonlight. The stone abutment of the bridge, eight inches wide, ran out from the edge of the escarpment to where the bamboo planking was still intact. From the end of the trail at the precipice, to the good footing, was a distance of ten feet. Men could have crossed on the top of the stone work, but the thought in the Captain's mind never occurred to me. Why did he hesitate here under fire? I was shivering with fatigue, though the night was hot.

"Who's got a good quiet horse?" he asked.

A trooper came forward.

"See if you can make it," the officer ordered. "Give him his head. Don't look back."

The soldier did not hesitate; his horse went out after him on the stone work, slipped and whirled downward, with a scream, crashing

through the small trees that protruded from the steep walls of the ravine. We heard the splash of water forty feet below. I couldn't see cause for criticism, but the Captain spoke low and sharply to the trooper; then led forth his own splendid mount—"Old Silver," he called him.

The top of a wall, eight inches wide, ten feet long—in betraying moonlight. Silver went over, —the same sickening sounds followed, then silence. I saw Captain Don standing on the wall, the hand outstretched that had held the bridle-rein. He stepped back and said to me:

"It can be done. Lead your puppy over."

It was as he said. My pony followed. I stood by him on the undestroyed portion of the bridge. The wonderful part to recall was that the entire troop followed without accident. It took a long time.

"I never had such a mean sensation, as that, —when I let go 'Old Silver's' bridle-rein," the Captain confided to me.

We found shelter in the walled declivity of the trail opposite, and waited while Don and a squad hunted the trail down into the gorge to rescue saddle-bags and troop-papers. . . . And now a ghostly nicker came up from the blackness. "Old Silver" after many moments, was brought up alive. They had found him standing up in the water, to which the thick branches of the ravine wall had cushioned the fall.

The halt had lamed us all; there was no going further. Among the most dismal words I ever heard were those from the Captain, following the order to make camp for the night:

"No fires of any kind, men. We want sleep, and fires draw shots."

We would have stood volleys for coffee and cooked bacon. Instead, we ate it raw with water and hardtack. I stretched out my saddle-blanket in a small nipa thatch by the trail. The last I remember was Don arranging his sentries. . . .

"You certainly did well," he said, with the sunlight abroad. "Twice a bullet crashed through this shack."

It had been no affair of mine. He was frying an extra emergency ration. I was one undivided hunger, and took this pellet of sausage appearance from him, feeling like the fox that had come to dine with the crane. My pony refused to get up from the fodder field that morning. I allowed the good little chap to revert to the natives once more, and climbed into the saddle of a missing trooper. Now, most mysteriously, I found myself thinking of other men and appreciating the morn. Astonishing replenishment had slipped in upon me—from that bean.

The Captain was ahead on "Old Silver," just a bit lame. We rejoined the main body at Naig by the sea. They had met a fight in the gulch

just before the town was entered. Their dead and wounded as usual were in the cathedral.

I have always thought of him with much regard—Don. C. of the White Horse troop. Afterward, word came that he was teaching mathematics at West Point. I know that he took the Luzon campaign in the same spirit that one would go out on a hunting trip. Doubtless, he laughed at the idea of The States crossing the world to break a perfectly proper insurrection on the part of century-suffering, priest-ridden Malays. He could shrug his shoulders and obey orders; but left to himself, he was very much a man, a natural aristocrat, and his men loved him.

It is a curious thing that the degenerative forces of the soldier system do not work solely in the ranks. The older the officer, the more he becomes one with the enlisted men. The chief charm of the service is in the freshness of ideal which the young officers bring to their work. But the life with the line is only a little higher than the line itself, of which I was a part in Tampa and Porto Rico—a narrow, waiting life—the end more or less predestined. It is bad for a man's soul to know that he can rise in ordinary course only by the death, retirement or disgrace of his superiors; and one is shocked by the corrosion of the years—the laziness and the gambling, the wine and the lost ideal. My old Captain B. who fell with the rum and wrote *Bad* on my paper,

was not an individual but a type. I saw many in the Eastern service, braced upon the lies of their life, ease-loving, sour-fleshed ruins—separated from the men of the bunks at the last, only by the precarious arrangement of a commission and certain dollars the month.

I rode out of Naig with a pack train and saw many days of most wonderful service—all written. Chronology is gone in memory. I remember the fires, the wounds, the dead; churches and the ringing bells of warning; dead in the cool shadows, pariah-dogs, hideous fatigue, maggots in the wounds, deep watery trails, the grunting carabaos; the sick and the starving that the natives left behind; the scores of towns we entered—heat, moonlight and knifed sentries; fruits, singing, deep drinking in Manila at the last. . . . Yes, it got away from me after four or five months; but the first drink I took in that service was an accident—from a canteen that I supposed to contain just water. One suffers for drinking hard in that climate; tissues of the brain break down quickly.

The death of General Lawton was the feature of the campaign. He had a great name as a fatalist, hard rider and pure soldier; having earned it from the Rebellion up. Correspondents were not encouraged to follow him, but it was said that the General was good to a civilian lucky enough to encounter him in the field.

With several war writers, I called at his headquarters in Manila one afternoon, just as he came in from a drive through adjacent provinces, a hike in which it was said that the General had made "the niggers climb trees and jump into the sea." . . . Yes, he was taking the field again in the morning. Yes, he would be pleased to have the gentlemen go.

That night I went down with a bundle of mail from San Sebastian to the post office in the Escolta, and saw the tail of a cavalry column riding out. I inquired what outfit was leaving town, and was informed that General Lawton was on the trail again. I hurried back, saddled and rode out after the cavalry. Rain began, a cold rain; all night it rained.

In the first light next morning the insurgents picked out the General from across the river of San Mateo—a tall figure, in white helmet and yellow oil-skins. I did not see him fall. They told me he was placing his troops, sending out scouts to find the fords in the swollen river. The Remington and Mauser slugs became thick about him. A staff officer stepped forward to draw the General back out of range, and fell at his feet. Lawton leaned over him—was said to have fallen across the body of his subordinate. He was dead afield at the time we were told to join him in Manila. . . . That was all I had—save the river, the white puffs among the stone ruins op-

posite, the shock that went through me, as through the army. A moment before the men were grumbling because they could not have their coffee.

Somehow I was apart from the army. The thing was dawning upon me, that this was the big story I came for. Somehow I knew that the men had not waited for the fords; that there had been drownings and a small massacre across the river. The idol of the regular army man had fallen. A hush followed that. . . . I was on the way back alone—sixteen miles—the Novaliches trail. The natives always crowd back after an army has passed. . . . I saw the stuff the army had tossed away in the night, found an officer's kit, partly rifled, abandoned probably by some Chinese servant, who had slipped out of the column in the darkness. My horse was noisy in the wet clay; silence otherwise—cold falling rain a part of it—stretched the nerves taut. My flesh was caught in the old familiar alternations of chill and fever.

The army was far behind; a little barrio ahead. I could not go through alone; and yet, all about were swimming rice paddies. The sound of my horse's hoofs tortured. I turned him loose; he was rocking tired anyway. Along the slippery dikes, to the right of the barrio, I crept, a mud-man. Looking over the clayey edge at last I saw three red-breeched native soldiers standing among the trees which sheltered the huts.

I felt as obvious as the rock in a desert land,

tossed my pistol away, thinking to claim the long chance of non-combatant, in case of capture. It was rather absurd to do this, but I wasn't right with fever. . . . Capture meant the knife, past doubt; I hated that thought. It was always hideous to me compared to the clean chug of a bullet in a busy part of the body. I don't recall exactly what occurred after seeing the native soldiers. I did not get around the town that way; and yet, can not remember where I struck the small American party that saw me through to the pumping station.

I reached the San Sebastian quarters, at midday, on foot. The major surgeon of the infantry outfit took me in charge; seemed to respect my prevailing passion for getting the big story off. He fed me quinine that afternoon—seventy grains of quinine, by his word. It seemed to me as I wrote, that all the pictures came clearly—a series of pictures of the night and the dawn and the day. I saw the big letter safely aboard a ship sailing that night—a ship ahead of any other Lawton letter.

The fever was routed, but I remember the bull carts passing on the cobble-stones the next day—how they jarred my head, though I lay high above the street and a hundred feet back. In the month following, I was much in the field. . . . I recall one terrific trail to Lake Taal, a camp at the water's edge in a town called Talisay. There

was *vino* in that town. A few of us went sleepless and adventurous on it. The air was thick with smoke from the big volcano out in the lake. There were nine fights to be written within a certain two weeks, including the Pony Pack massacre. I tried to think them out in order on the transport home, but there were drink-gaps through all the later Luzon campaigning. A man never knows how utterly an animal he is, until he stops to think in the midst, or soon after, a rush of field service.

In San Francisco my transportation arrived, reading over the Canadian Pacific. I was exactly nine days reaching Detroit, and had less than five dollars expense money. Thin-blooded from nearly a year of tropical service, in low shoes, without overcoat or blankets; a washout on the Shasta route going north; snow-slides in the Cascades after we were finally turned eastward; nine nights in different day coaches, a bag of crackers from time to time, with an onion, an apple and a bit of sausage—altogether it was a test of vitality. Temperature was fathoms deep below zero, up Calgary way and in Medicine Hat; there was a night in the station at St. Paul, crackling cold outside, and the steam went down after midnight; at last, an hour's wait in Chicago, one night's ride more, and thirty cents left. I wished that I could drug myself and wake up at home. . . . There was a large free lunch in a

saloon in Dearborn Street, a hot stove, a tired man playing the piano. I had to have a nickel to get up town in Detroit next morning; the rest I spent for large glasses of beer, five of them in the hour, and somebody bought for the pianist and me. . . . I was lifted a little, but not greatly, though the night passed well enough, after the train moved.

19

COUNTRY

ONE story of the Luzon campaign, I looked up in the newspaper files of Detroit. To my dismay I found that the first letter in America containing the story of General Lawton's death had been run on a back page. I had taken chances for that story, that I wouldn't have taken five years later for all the newspapers in America. It was an unforgivable bit of newspaper handling—all that was granted, but the thing was done.

"I couldn't make head nor tail of it," the managing editor said—the same who came to me head down twice one day.

"It was a ship ahead of any other. I came in alone part of the way, over a hostile and live hot trail. I took enough quinine to kill a man in this country, to get the story done—"

"You were so full of the whole thing—that you didn't tell us what it was all about."

It was vague. I hadn't done the pictures, as they passed before my mind. At the time, it

seemed that I was carving a series of cameos from that night and morning.

The incident is significant of a long struggle I had afterward to bring forth my realisations in living flesh for earthly use. The fever of the body that day is but a symbol of the emotional ecstasy with which the spirit of things is seen by one who loves his dreams. If he paints his visions before they have come down into flesh (as they must, to become significant to men of flesh) the result is a mistiness and attenuation of vitality which can only animate the mind of a visionary.

On the ship coming home, was a discharged soldier named Dulin. He was the exact ideal —from a city standpoint—of what a story-soldier should be. I was young enough to fit the two together. Dulin was a drunken *courageur* of fine moments and outdoor ideals—tender, tragic, game, an obvious ruffian. I put a dozen or fifteen stories of action about him with Luzon settings; and because I was reeking with colour, that I had earned diving through colour—the tales weren't so bad. Brain would have betrayed them, but I was too close to the animal and the field to suffer them to become heady.

Dulin "caught on" in a syndicate way among Sunday newspapers. By the time the fifth was released, I had an income and a following—pack trains and the trails—smoky trails, rain-sodden

trails, red-hot, high-noon trails—jungle firing, moonlight, sizzling bacon, dreams of women and home and over all, that animal thing, which seems so godlike to the brute and the boy—the fear to show the fear of death.

Toward the last, I was afraid the stories were getting away from me. I had the instinct that if I went too far, I would show my hand. I stopped in the "height of success." There was fear in this, and vanity, but I think something pure, too. All the papers wired or wrote me to go on. It was not good business to stop, but Dulin looked big to me; he seemed done. I preferred to pick up a new series.

My real purpose of it all was to make a book of Dulin. I count it the most valuable thing that ever happened to me—the final refusal of the S. S. McClure Company to make this book. It was a squeak. They found bad spots in the midst of the "extraordinary moments" of the narrative. . . . Penelope had married me. I was twenty-two years old, temperamentally a drunkard. If my passion for publicity had been appeased to a degree at this time, my ruin as a man and a worker would have been inevitable. McClure's accepted an isolated pack train story for the magazine, but sent back Dulin. The editors advised me to ruminate over the manuscript for three months, to sustain and tighten the work, eliminate its weaknesses, get the whole in more

lasting form. It had been shaped for newspaper needs, they pointed out, and there was a difference.

Now see the smutted boy enraged; observe how ready I was for the strong medicine of recognition.

I felt them wrong, insufferably wrong. I was busy with a new series—on the eve of abject failure. I tossed Dulin aside, loaned the manuscript and have never had it back. You can tell how deep I had to go, to grind off this arrogance, when I say to you that even eight years afterward, I would have counted such a letter as a winning, as a success almost, and plunged into the work of improvement with the original impetus of the writing. How weak I was, how unsteady, when a little newspaper success could sour me; the intolerance, the limp spine that could not go decently to work again.

My second newspaper series was ordered largely, but did not make good. Newspaper markets, one after another, slipped out like weak stones in a wall. I saw ephemeral praise die down. Timeliness, always treacherous, slunk away from Dulin and Luzon, so that I was not even tempted to make that struggle over again. I did some newspaper feature work, and sold a magazine story occasionally, but we were very poor. That was God's good for us. I see that now.

At this time, the volcano Pelee in Martinique covered St. Pierre with death. A Chicago newspaper wired me on Wednesday, the night after the cataclysm:

"Want to begin publication on Sunday if possible, hundred thousand word story based on volcano disaster, Martinique. A story of love, peril and all kinds of excitement. The story to run in daily instalments, two columns on a week day and a page on Sunday. Will you write it? If so, please come to Chicago on first train. You could be thinking out the plot while riding. Suggest, as outline for plot, a wealthy young American touring West Indies on private yacht. Touches at San Pierre. Falls in love with beautiful girl whom he meets near the statue of Josephine. When Pelee first shows evidences of eruption, he, being amateur geologist, becomes interested and investigates. When experts tell Governor of Martinique there's no danger, he asserts there is. Tries to induce sweetheart to flee for safety. Finally makes up mind to abduct her to save her. Gets to her home early morning of eruption. Finally saves her after all kinds of dire danger, etc. This merely suggestion. Might play story as written three months ago. Remarkably prophetic, etc. Would need only a few chapters to start and

thing would work out itself as you go along. Please answer to-night what you think. Matter, of course, could be syndicated and also made into a book which would sell well."

I find my reply written on the lower margin of the old telegram: "You're on. Leave for Chicago this morning." The newspaper reconsidered the idea of intimating to the public that the story had been written ahead, but the Sunday page appeared—turned in within twenty-four hours of my arrival. I was not sufficiently "in hand" to do a task of this sort well. I found grave worry and deep grinding at times. The one illuminating thought in regard to fiction—that there is no law—had not yet begun to emancipate. With every early line put down, I felt that the entire narrative must be considered. That was heavy lifting.

But the month did me good; the strain built tissue. There was something in the experience, not unlike that hour of perfect teaching in high school—when a subject was given and an essay demanded without props. The ideas of the telegram were not carried out, but they had a certain prevailing influence. Penelope came over to take care of me. Two weeks elapsed before price was mentioned. I suggested three hundred dollars; Penelope said a thousand, as another might say: "You had better ask for three-fifty."

I choked that night when I asked for five hundred dollars, and the easy acceptance of this price by the managing editor made my head swim. Still it was a poor piece of work—poor "Wrath of Pelee—" and I was ashamed of it before it was done.

The devil of ambition was now burning me night and day, but my stuff had turned the corner; all that was blithe and spontaneous subsided. I was reading deeply and forgetting the field; the sense of origins dimmed. It was the second of the tragic transition periods. My drinking was done at home now, and in and around my work was the study of material science. Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Tyndall, gave me reading, and they were splendid wreckers, although the personal protestantism in my blood gave long but losing battle. This was my one deep dip into matter. Penelope and I had a box of spiders in the study. We called them Addie, Mamie and the like, watched them lay their eggs and coil their silk about them. . . . One night, over two years after we were married, I looked up from the typewriter to find Penelope half-laughing, half-crying. I crossed the room. She told me. I think Penelope was never sweeter than that night—though I see it from now, better than then.

We went to the old house in lower Lincoln to live with my mother and grandmother. . . .

Yes, the old lady was still sitting there. She used to call me if I came in late. She would say that no one could tuck her feet in "like Willie." She died in there—the room next the dining-room—one serene summer morning. Across the yard on a neighbour's porch, a canary was singing as I have never heard since.

Everything flattened out in a money way. I had to take a newspaper position again, going to Pittsburg for it. For six or seven months I did a daily column there, verse and story. Except that my work was a bit heavy from the science now and then, and aspired to be literary, its success was sufficient. I put everything in it; and found training for various handlings. I did the column to suit me; used it for growth, and informed the president one day:

"When I feel this getting to be a grind, you won't be able to buy it."

Yet we needed the money; and my salary I considered generous enough. . . . Penelope went home to have her baby; and when I followed, the Pittsburg paper sent a letter after me, turning me loose.

We went into the country to live—my mother, the new little girl, Penelope and I. We were not ready for the country; at least, I was not. A man must bring a certain wealth with him, if simplicity is to yield her treasure. I had neither mastered the town, nor did I consider myself

whipped; so I had not finished with the complications. My work did not stand up in the silence; some vibration that I was artificial enough still to require, was denied me. Magazine sales were far apart. Because we could live very cheaply, I dared do a novel. It failed—a failure that shattered me for days. I looked about, found that I owed everybody; that the whole little town was waiting for something that the book was to do; that the town had waited months, and I had not a single story out. I wrote to a Pittsburg millionaire whom I had sketched and interviewed. He sent me some money by return mail. Penelope was rapt with her baby—though I was far from fatherhood. From this distance, I am considerably awed by my attitude toward these two of mine at that time. . . . Between the flowers of the wall paper in the old house we lived in, I had written this sentence:

"Those things which happen to every one—birth and death, for instance—are not of much account."

I disliked the fatuousness which I had often found in young fathers. The commonest men I knew had children. I refused to believe there was anything wonderful in mine. The fact is, I could not turn to any of these things—with my work faring so badly. I was starving—like a hunter who has trailed a single buck for days and days. I wanted that buck. I wanted to bring

him down, and feed upon him. I wanted the world to answer my work.

Yet my work was not good; I could not see then, that it was not good. I scorned the work of men who were "making good"; and yet, in my relation with the magazines, I blamed myself rather than the editors.

These were the years in which I worshipped the epigram; in which style was everything. I did not deem a page of copy worth anything, if it did not contain some trick or vanity of my own, to identify it from the work of other men. I played to the detached thought, and made much of it. You could not have made me believe that a man's manhood mattered greatly, if he wrote well. I bowed to the idea of catching the crowd; yet I did not love the crowd. I was willing to use sham to catch the crowd, and startling effects. I suffered all the shames of self-consciousness, burned with the defiling fire of ambition; knew nothing of the purification of a zeal for service. My passion was the simple one, to make more noise than my neighbour; to identify my name and body with the world's applause.

My work deserved no answer; yet my head becomes hot now to think of those days, and the suffering—which was reflected upon all in my house. I was stubborn and thick—working at a low vibration—yet I wanted the world. McClure's had refused all my stories for the maga-

zine, subsequent to the pack train story. Another man had done the series with Philippine colour that the editors had planned for me. . . . It seemed almost that I had stopped to grow out there in the country. I know that I have had days this year, in which I progressed farther than during months there. That was one of the long nights—and the morning broke giving me a chance to go to Asia again.

20

WORK

STUDY to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. . . . I can not rush off to another war without a moment's halt. Work and life to me mean the same thing. Through work in my case, a transfer of consciousness was finally made from animalism to a certain manhood. This is the most important transaction in the world. Our hereditary foes are the priests and formalists who continue to separate a man's work from his religion. A working idea of God comes to the man who has found his work—and the splendid discovery invariably follows, that his work is the best expression of God. All education that does not first aim to find the student's life-work for him is vain, often demoralising; because, if the student's individual force is little developed, he sinks deeper into the herd, under the levelling of the classroom.

There are no men nor women alive, of too deep

visioning, nor of too lustrous a humanity, for the task of showing boys and girls their work. No other art answers so beautifully. This is the intensive cultivation of the human spirit. This is world-parenthood, the divine professon.

I would have my country call upon every man who shows vision and fineness in any work, to serve for an hour or two each day, among the schools of his neighbourhood, telling the children the mysteries of *his* daily task—and watching for his own among them.

All restlessness, all misery, all crime, is the result of the betrayal of one's inner life. One's work is not being done. You would not see the hordes rushing to pluck fruits from a wheel, nor this national madness for buying cheap and selling dear—if as a race we were lifted into our own work.

The value of each man is that he has no duplicate. The development of his particular effectiveness on the constructive side, is the one important thing for him to begin. A man is at his best when he is at his work; his soul breathes then, if it breathes at all. Of course, the lower the evolution of a man, the harder it is to find a task for him to distinguish; but here is the opportunity for all of us to be more eager and tender.

When I wrote to Washington asking how to plant asparagus, and found the answer; when I asked about field-stones and had the output of the

Smithsonian institute turned over to me—my throat choked; something sang all around; the years I had hated, put on strange brightenings. I had written Home for guidance. Our national Father had answered. Full, eager and honest, the answer came—the work of specialists which had moved on silently for years. I saw the brotherhood of the race in that—for that can only come to be in a Fatherland.

So the Father of us all answers when we do our work well. His revelations rain down, according to our receptivity. All our struggle and training is to reach this receptivity. We must master the body first; then the brain—after that, we receive. Thus you see how work and religion are one; how all our years of training, in the thrall of perfecting our task, is but a mastering of body and brain; how it runs parallel to the austerities of the religionist who inflicts tortures upon his body to conquer it, and the terrors of concentration upon his brain to keep it silent, in order to hear the soul's voice.

All pure preparation for expression in the work we love, integrates immortality. All the tests and temptations of the world are offered merely for us to master them. All evolution from the rock, through lichen, limpet, lizard, through the rising spines to manhood, and through man's living soul, to prophecy and divinity,—is but a perfecting of our receptivity to the revelations of

God. We refine to higher and higher vibrations, each revelation which we reach, changing the world through our expression of it. The roof of earth is the floor of heaven. The upper node of human receptivity touches the lower plane of spiritual revelation—and the result is a remembered human utterance. The orbit of the satellite has intersected the orbit of its primary. All dimensions of evolution are reached in this way; the highest plant becomes the lowest animal. The first resulting flashes of contact, are only suggestions of the steady flame to come.

The highest expressions of human genius in the past are but suggestions of that which is to be the steady consciousness of the world-men of the future.

I can hardly wait to tell you of such things alone; they break out from this narrative of sordid affairs, from the slow grind of the years; yet it was this grinding that gave me surface to receive certain realisations; and it is the years that will enflesh them for other men, as no formal essay could do. I do not want to give you visions. I want them blood and bone to move among men —the spirit shining through.

Give a man his work and you may watch at your leisure, the clean-up of his morals and manners. Those who are best loved by the angels, receive not thrones, but a task. I would rather

have the curse of Cain, than the temperament to choose a work because it is easy.

Real work becomes easy only when the man has perfected his instrument, the body and brain. Because this instrument is temporal, it has a height and limitation to reach. There is a year in which the sutures close. That man is a master, who has fulfilled his possibilities—whether tile-trencher, stone-mason, writer, or carpenter, hammering periods with nails. Real manhood makes lowly gifts significant; the work of such a man softens and finishes him, renders him plastic to finer forces.

No good work is easy. The apprenticeship, the refinement of body and brain, is a novitiate for the higher life—for the purer receptivity—and this is a time of strain and fatigue, with breaks here and there in the cohering line.

The achievement of mastery brings with it the best period of a human life. After the stress, the relaxation. In its very nature, this relaxation is essential, for the pure receptivity can only come when the tensity of the fight is done. If your horse is trained, you do not need to picket him, and watch lest he hang himself. Your body has learned obedience; you may forget it in the trance of work. Indeed, the body becomes automatic and healthy alone, when it permits you to forget it, for that is the nature of its servitude to the soul. Having mastered the brain, you may turn

it free. All its equipment will come to call. . . . You lie in the prairie—looking at the majestic stars, Polaris at your head, your arms stretched out to Vega and Capella, your eyes lost in the strong tender light of Arcturus—your animals at peace about you in clean pastures. They have earned their freedom, because they have learned your voice.

The best period of a man's life; days of safety and content; long hours in the pure trance of work; ambition has ceased to burn, doubt is ended, the finished forces turn *outward* in service. According to the measure of the giving is the replenishment in vitality. The pure trance of work, the different reservoirs of power opening so softly; the instrument in pure listening—long forenoons passing, without a single instant of self-consciousness, desire, enviousness, without even awareness of the body.

A man must rise above the self to utter for the world, must rise above the brain, if he is to be the instrument of the forces which drive the world. In the same way that one's vanities and one's emotions throw out the purpose of a production, so does the brain with what it knows, and what it hears and reads. The brain's uppermost thought is an obstruction that invariably breaks the line of the still higher instrumentation. The brain's business is to receive. This is the old law for the attainment of the higher life—the yielding, the

submission of self; the *Thy Will be Done* of matter to spirit.

This is a turning to the very source of life—as Mother Earth turns her fields to the sun.

Every law that makes for man's finer workmanship, makes for his higher life. The mastery of self prepares man to make his answer to the world for his being. The man who has mastered himself is one with all. Castor and Pollux tell him immortal love stories; all is marvellous and lovely from the plant to the planet, because man is a lover, when he has mastered himself. All the folded treasures and open highways of the mind; its multitude of experiences and unreckonable possessions—are given over to the creative, and universal force,—the same force that is lustrous in the lily, incandescent in the suns, memorable in human heroism, immortal in man's love for his fellow man.

This force alone holds the workman true through his task. He, first of all, feels the uplift; he, first of all, is cleansed by the power of the superb life-force passing through him. . . . This is rhythm; this is the cohering line; this is being the One. But there are no two instruments alike, since we have come up by different roads from the rock; and though we achieve the very sanctity of self-command, our inimitable hallmark is wrought in the fabric of our task.

I would have been dead long since, and detest-

able in every detail before the passing—but for the blessedness of work. I have emerged from hideous dissipation,—shaking, puerile, as ripe seemingly for the merciful bullet, as the insect-tortured beast, loose in the field to die. Again and again have I been so, yet by God's good plan, —I have found myself once more, here, at the machine, as now. I have felt my own body resume life, its wastes and poisons relaxing their death-hold, answering the movements which mean life. I have sensed the devils leaving my brain, and prevented their return,—through this godly guardian, work. Every utterance worth the making from this instrument, has done more for me than it could possibly do for another. I love my work. As servant of it, I am here, on my way, and all is well.

21

MANCHURIA

I SAW Penelope better from the distance, and the little girl. The mystery of them prevailed upon me at sea, compounded with the distance, my mother moving around them. There is no doubt about one lonely man. The physical journeys and adventures of that period are done. I have exhausted the soldier and correspondent; written out the bleakness of the Japanese as a nation in its military state of growth; the shame and hidden brilliance of Russia,—that great orb among the nations which seems companioned, and often all but occulted, by a dead planet.

The Asiatic story of a recent fiction character runs close to mine. This particular story-man seems to have something of his author's old sense of inferiority, also, the need of deep grinding. His open wound was mine, a touch of deck-passage, and the fight to get home on the transport, wherein I failed at last.

His sudden discovery in Japan that he was out

"on a shoestring"; his life in the Japanese Inn for many waiting weeks, disbarment from place with the second Japanese army, night rides with Amoya-san; finally his great adventure in friendship and interminable journey to New Chwang and the Russian field—these are almost identically my experiences.

From this distance, through all that service, I have to stop and think step by step—which experiences were lived in the body, and which were enacted with the vitalities and properties of the fiction mind. The difference is certainly not one of *realness* to me; in fact, I am less in a "daze" in the run of a story, than in an exterior sequence of events.

This fact made it very clear that as we grow, our experiences are gained mentally rather than physically. The suspicion deepens now, however, that we have not ceased to be boys, until the really important experiences of life are neither physical nor mental, but spiritual. I tried to work this thought out with the same fiction-man, placing him alone, in a depression, and acquainting him with a conviction of his leprous condition. He faced out death, and the failure of his ambition—to him, worse than death—reaching the point in which he could say without strain, "Let it come." The whole experience was psychological, but he drew the full character-imprint from the experience, far more than a lower

human organism could have drawn from years of dying from the disease itself. This in its way was a recent experience of mine. I was not the same afterward. One's attitude toward death is determined altogether by the state of his inner life.

Always in Detroit I had a fountain of knowledge in C. D. C. During the science days, especially, he helped me—long walks and night talks—always ahead of me in reading and deeper among the facts. Pittsburg gave me the remarkable J. Ed. L., a newspaper friend of fine flavour and quality, an unfailing hand from him in my glooms. The pearl of a woman he married, I have for a friend—that was one of the best things J. Ed. did. There was another strong and ruddy heart in Pittsburg for me, Grif A., a compacter of my science, a mellower of man-stuff, such as mine was. These are strong men; another appeared during the Russo-Japanese war.

This Grant W., a Californian, not only staked me for the Manchurian venture, when things went badly in Japan, but went along. It was a significant journey apart from the war stuff which requires no chronicle. Grant had an idea of God—and he gave it to me through many nights and days. I rebelled, even though I felt it sinking in; I gathered all my materials against it, but they merely sunk or swam according to their gravity. I got it against my will and

against my ancestors—especially because Grant was my idea of a man in so many ways.

We took a lot of different ships to get to New Chwang—a three weeks' journey, with stops at Shanghai, Chifu, Tientsin and Shanhaikwan. I was crude and a ruffian; I think there must have been something terrible to him in my toiling, for I filled space night and day, and drank through the last half of the day's work. He was ill, a gentleman, and had above me that ten years which most changes a man—yet he stood by. I measured every idea of mine according to his, and was always proven short; how short, I did not know in many cases until afterward.

I went alone one afternoon through the native city of Chifu. In an hour or so, everything half-human and horrible was revealed. It was like a swift review of man's long course from the ape. I wrote the story of it that night, on the only basis that a man can account for such things—the cohering line of spirit, on which many births are strung; of man making his world for a season, and as sorry a job of it, as did the Prodigal Son.

I did not see all this then, as now: That we reach the end of simple consciousness under the divine plan; that as self-conscious men we go forth and find the only hell there is; that the return to the Father's house with world-consciousness is the vital hope of the true spirits of this

hour. I could not grasp then that we meet hell on our journeys only to impress upon us the splendour of our divine right; that in no other way can we earn a sympathetic understanding of the world and our longing for the illumination of Home; that we can not be the masters of our property until we have come to appreciate it, through the savage sufferings of our going forth.

What I saw that day, in the native-city of Chifu, took on a certain larger dimension from all Grant had given me on the ships. I read the story to him that night. He smiled and called it good. It found a real answer in Chicago. From this first glimpse into the eternal background of causation, the prevailing passion of my life arose.

We crossed the Liao in the night, reached a Chinese hostelry in the midst of the Russian garrison in a blackness so thick, that we had to touch our guide's shoulder through certain windings. A centipede killed with a black note-book on the wall that night recalls the date 4, 4, '04. Grant and I were aroused in the dawn by the singing Russians. One of the greatest moments of my life—that brigade swinging through the Chinese street. I was lifted plane by plane, up from the deep fathoms of fatigue, (and through that strange borderland, where we may look backward and forward,) into upstanding inspiration, from that mighty music. We climbed out of

the window to a roof below us. I waved at the peasant-soldiers—voice broken and tears streaming down. When I turned to clutch Grant it was the same with him. I think I first saw the Ploughman there.

A poisoned wound became malignant at this time. It was like a scald locally, and fevered me throughout. I had to leave the field finally for care; for many days and nights was without sleep. Deep dark failure was upon me. The journey back to Japan was a steady beat of agony, sometimes in the jam of Chinese refugees; sometimes massed with the Chinese of the deck-passage.

My mind was taking only the pictures, but deeper realisations were enacted in that long passage. I had come to see the battle, staked everything for the battle, but that was not granted me. Instead I saw the deeper havoc of war, the dreg-men of the world, the singing peasants—down-life, crushed life, body-consciousness. I did not regard Chinese and Russian under glass, nor examine them as a passing tourist. I saw something that no photographer's lens ever caught. I lay in the dirt with the poorest men in the world. I looked into their faces and saw myself. In the depth of agony—in the mystic revelations of it—I once reached out my hand, and it was taken by the yellow hand of a coolie. The touch shook a

waver of consciousness through the thickness of semi-delirium, and turning I found the slant eyes of a brother in brutalisation. How poor in pictures are the battle lines of a hundred campaigns compared to the miracle of that.

Japan was like home after such a journey. They welcomed me at the little Japanese Inn, and the fulness of it made my voice break. . . . Dickey B. was there, his big work at Port Arthur yet to do. . . . He was counting nickels and dimes, as I had been forced to do always; and yet, it was through him that I made the steamer in the harbour. I had two hundred dollars coming in the mails, and turned over an order for it to the American Consul. Dickey got me passage money from the war men, while I writhed at the thought. Only utter downness, made this acceptance possible. There was another operation at sea for me; but the wounds, neither old nor new, would heal. In fact, I was home, before these ruins began to repair.

22

ART-LAMPS

IN the next year something went wrong with my war-stuff. . . . I had gone from the country to Chicago during the autumn, when the last fighting of the campaign was on. With some knowledge of terrain and troops, I followed the war-cable game with "expert" effrontery, for a newspaper that was spending a fortune to cover the battles. I learned much from the work of other men. But I had heard the Russians sing. I had found in the eyes of that Chinese—a brother not a stranger.

It would seem that I could go straight and say this; that this tremendous thing, worth lives of degradation to accomplish, should be uttered at once. It is a simple thing; other men have found it; Saviours of men have told us that it is the Grail, the final chivalry; but I was not ready for such simple things, for sane and holy things like this. The simplicity of the peasant was behind me; the simplicity of the seer far ahead. I was between, in the hell and compli-

cation of self-consciousness. All misery was designed to stimulate my emerging. Perhaps the something that was wrong with my war-stuff, had to do with the turn upward; in any event, something was conceived within, a long bearing.

In the midst of a battle-story, a certain scorn would come over me, irresistible—for the thing itself, and for the men of the wars I had seen, so stupid and short-sighted and engrossed. My brain wanted to make the pictures that the markets wanted; but something within laughed at them; made monkeys of them. I was not finished enough to show the fatuousness of things as they are. That is an adult's business.

We went back to Detroit for the winter—the old house in lower Lincoln again. I found a little to do in a Sunday paper way, while I fought out the bigger thing that would not let me rest. Hard poverty came again. That was all right. . . . There was V. O. B.—a little fighting newspaper woman whom I used to see, when I took my copy down to the paper. She loved animals and hated men; had beautiful eyes and a tonic acidity of utterance. There was usually a lost dog under her chair. The next day you would see it washed, possibly ribboned. Many a time I have stood by waiting for the accustomed word from V. O. B. since I admired her much, while she called whole lists of friends to find a home for the current stranger-forlorn.

She was furiously good. One day she said to me:

"Billy Comfort, why don't you stop lying to yourself?"

There is no immediate connection—just that. It was a jewel she gave me. The longer I live, the more I thank her for it. That proved a first-magnitude moment—like the Russian singing, and the yellow hand, my hand touched. . . . There was drinking; it seems that I had begun to accept this as a handicap. One day, in the lower hall of the newspaper building, an editor of the paper drew me aside and asked in the manner of dark secrecy:

"Where do you study theosophy?"

"I don't," said I.

"You write it."

I asked what it was. He thought I was joking, but finally said:

"The articles of yours which they run upstairs are pure theosophy. You preach reincarnation in every line."

He promised to bring me a book of theosophy. I fell to thinking of the effect of talks with Grant W. in Asia. He was familiar with Hindu literature, but I thought of him as a blend of Christian-mystic and anarchist. As for reincarnation it seemed to me beyond discussion. I had only to identify the word, in order to realise that it meant something which was already a

conviction—something that had broken forth from within, when I passed through the native quarter of Chifu that day. I have never undertaken to explain the process of our various rebirths upon one cohering line of spiritual identity; but with me, something of the sort is settled, and forms the basis of all thinking; so completely established that I often forget to explain.

The editor gave me a letter of introduction to one of the ancient wisdom classes of Detroit; also an Annie Besant book—a little one on Thought-Power and Control, which gave me great value. I liked the class. A new period was begun. I stopped drinking, became a vegetarian. Material science never gripped me as did these metaphysical affairs. I saw more clearly Saint Paul and Isaiah; the figure of Jesus came a step nearer. Frequently I read five or seven hours the day. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*, (which some one said wasn't esoteric and wasn't Buddhism,) stretched my skull again, gave me new brain-breathing, as the Greek had done years before. I shall never forget the day when I caught an imperfect glimpse of our solar system's general movement and rhythm—as one might see it all a little apart from earth. During these months I met M. R., a Detroit young woman, the resources of whose wisdom and good taste are apparently as inexhaustible to-day, as they seemed to me then. I read more of the

straight Hindu literature toward the last; some H. P. B., but treasure the Bhagavad Gita out of it all. The writings of Swami Vivekananda (whose part in my first newspaper position has been told) have appealed to me as strong and pure work. His service in this country is more and more significant as the perspective lengthens. H. P. B. needs no sanction of mine, nor am I yet ready to furnish one; but red or yellow or white, there is certainly a solar quality and dimension to that woman. She is yet far from culmination—hardly lifted above the horizon mists.

Though I am not a theosophist, nor cultist of any kind, nothing but good came to me from those days.

I was doing another novel, around the volcano Pelee. The thing appealed to me as calling to be done. The bundle of Chicago newspapers containing the other story was unopened, but the tropical setting in insular French seemed to be mine. I gave it all I had; went into the closet every morning to practise meditation, lived and dreamed the story out. . . . I was cool from the diet; and dry from reading which was not yet mine. The woman of the story was an effort. I remember how hard it was for her to speak; how I re-wrote and doctored her conversations. If I should meet a tithe of that strain now in the making of a character, I should know in-

stantly that the creature was impossible. The big volcano worked better. There were worthwhile moments there. But I remember the whole story, as one of intense labour.

How long is the way. Had any one told me then that my work was bound to fail because it taxed me too deeply, I should have answered in anger. Yet this is true: Wherever the brain works hard, there is imitation and imperfection. No great book of a creative kind was ever done by prodigious brain effort. The strain is apparent to those who discern. Brain struggle cannot hold John and Mary true to themselves. Brain is whimsical, different every day; it is part of the body that dies; that's the truth of it. The body that lives and the work that lives is a deeper expression.

All crudity in life and workmanship come from the imperfection of our faculty for self-criticism. Years of strain under the drive of ambition, reinforce and expand the tissue of the instrument, as surely as labour builds the arm and deep-breathing the chest. The infinite failures of such years are consummate in their work of sensitising the faculty of self-criticism. All fine production is a guarantee of the producer's good taste. To appear at all, the product has to run through the arsenals of self-criticism, as through gleaming rows of steel. The work is not good until the critical faculty is rhythmic

with the instrument; its operation silent and unobtrusive. A man consciously avoiding a certain evil, or conscious of many pitfalls, is still painfully hampered. One by one, these rocks and shoals must be charted for the inner eye. This is knowledge of evil, as necessary to the worker and the saint, as his aspiration to do good. The value of a man's failures is not finished until his avoidance of the causes of failure becomes automatic. This, too, is part of the brain struggle.

The worker is only ready for his real part when all these brain-matters are concluded, and he ceases to be conscious of his development; when every voice has its message of good and evil, but is powerless to break the cohering line of individuality; when the living voices out of the past sustain but never intrude; when technique, style, knowledge, and self-critical faculty are finished, and like healthy organs of the body, perform their work silently, without pain and distraction.

There are no two ways about the struggle being hard. Many good men use up their intrinsic vitality on the way, but more fall in the by-ways. It is much easier to tell how great work is done than to spend the entire precious period up to middle life, in the torturing atmosphere of self-reformation; much easier to turn a reasonable brain-readiness and mediocre equip-

ment to supplement the work that has already been done, than to set about breaking new paths; much easier for the novelist of to-day to build his products in a mid-Victorian frame and setting, than to write from the ruck of this marvellous modern hour. That which has been publicly sanctioned passes more readily through the critical training of the brain, than any message of the absolutely new. A common idea commonly expressed is far more apt to run the gamut of technical knowledge, than a big new idea blazingly expressed.

According to the wealth of equipment is the slowness of its conformation. Every invention that contains a revolutionary idea is at first crudely embodied; but thousands follow who are capable of refining the idea. Many critics would rather have the laws preserved than the idea expressed; but these are not reckoned with by the producer at the source of things. He breaks laws for the installation of better laws; perhaps he will say—there is no law.

The company of fellow-workers for more than one week in the year is contamination. Better an island and one book, than long exposure to the coalesced brilliance wasted in a club library. Many a man has had a thought, and lost it listening to others. It is the levelling of the schoolroom again. The young worker who incorporates the methods of other men, finds himself

in middle-life lost in ephemeral fashions. The real worker goes his way alone. Standing alone—that is the way of fine work and of pure living. Again, the training for the one is the training for the other; all that has to do with real work, has to do with the life that lasts.

You will hear them talk under the art-lamps—of style and effects, of the sense of the soul. One does not feel his soul when he is rhythmic with it. He *is* the soul when spiritual consciousness has arrived. His life and work breathe effects—because he is an individual. The finished character threads effects, as pearls upon a string. The necklace is the aim—not the cut gem.

There is a devil in the room where art is being discussed. Art has ceased to parallel reality. An art of to-day is named for the degree of its tangent from reality. So often has a man been clamped to mediocrity from listening to other men, from long discussion of effects, and long brooding upon methods. Real talk is about the thing—not how to do it. So often the result of these gatherings of artists—is that tragic turning to art as aim. Before God, we are not here to be artists, but men.

23

TRINITIES

SO infallibly does the self intrude. I find myself pointing the way with a certain gusto—the way that was forced upon me. I was always in such poverty that an art club was an impossible pavilion. I was much afield, and those men and women who touched my life were divinely busy showing me by their lives and not by their words, what is real under heaven. Again and again, my life has been turned from perversion, by the bestowals of others—glad bestowals of high human value—again and again and again.

You have seen some of my home-comings. My whole life is marked with maimed home-comings—from war and drink and dishonour—and always I have found love and healing, from my mother and Penelope, and afterward from the little girl. Never was the sense given to me from them of my incumbrance and apparition. At every falling, I have been lifted. The passionate yearning which comes to a man afield,

across the world, for those few whom the distance has not effaced—the ever-calling, ever-beckoning few—is a sound influence in man-construction. Even though I returned after the healing, to this furious illusion of world-conquest, I could not utterly forget the miracles of compassion.

At the end of seven months of study, dieting, concentration-practise, and novel-building, I took on the result to New York. Money to get there was all I could borrow. I would not trust the manuscript to express.

I found Grant W. and Dickey B. The old trinity of the Japanese Inn was complete. Dickey was on the high tide after his Port Arthur conquest, a very busy young man; yet not changed badly. He had always been imperious—even when counting nickels and dimes—a deep, lucky, self-reliant gamester. Somehow though, when he gave you his time, you felt it valuable. Grant was the same old master. We talked another night away in an old studio-loft.

The next day was Saturday. My manuscript had been submitted, and I called upon a little coterie of students of the mystic in Lenox Avenue. They made me welcome—rare young celibates who did material things well by day, and studied God at night. They had all been through the trainings of mind and body which had engrossed me to such length; and proceeded to advise me

strongly against the vegetable diet, even taking a blood-test and showing me the inertia of my present physical foundation. Hours were required, but I was convinced. I even had, before I left, a suspicion as to the cause of the "headiness" of the romantic moments in the new Pelee novel.

That night I dined in an Italian restaurant with Grant W., and Dickey B. Bars were down after seven months; drink came in with the fleshpots. Moments of that night contain some of the most remarkable physical sensations. The city was baking hot—wine and food and faces; old friends, Asiatic memories—the altogether new sound of the voices and laughter of women. . . . But I couldn't stay. They could never understand. It was slow, slow drinking for me. I knew that a deluge was coming and went out to meet it alone. Strange it was—I wanted them; I was happy with them, but could not stay. . . . Hours afterward I crawled in with Grant, but was away again before he was up—Sunday—down among the bars again—a day of terrific heat. Grant found me. He saw that it was different from the drinking in Asia. It seemed that my body couldn't stand this sudden reversal, in the midst of prostrating heat, but I afforded every chance for it to destroy itself. . . . The next morning, before being caught and blinded in the killing caravan, I went to the pub-

lishers. The book had been read over Sunday; the reader had reported unfavourably.

I was in the street with the manuscript. They had asked to have it read again; they were not altogether decided, but I had demanded the manuscript. Dickey found me, asked to care for the story and submit it at my word to his publisher. I refused, though I had no thought what to do. I wanted to breathe—could only endure those who could drink as I drank. . . . I went to the Battery. The crocodile in the Aquarium fascinated me. I seemed to know him—seemed to know how he lost his eye. Pictures, as from other lives, unfolded to frighten me. . . . I would go and take drinks, and return to look at the crocodile. Once as I watched, his head turned slowly to the right. A cry escaped, so concentrated had I been. Such shocks of fright are only possible when one's consciousness is out of the body. . . . I met some soldiers, and went with them, for hours drinking together. We had covered the same trails before. . . . The subway uptown at last; the air in the tube seemed dead; I fell asleep. The call of my stop aroused, and I hurried out. On the platform, my hands opened and shut, without the manuscript. The train was moving.

That moment marked me. It was my only copy, save for the rough and incomplete first draft at home. I had the impulse psychically

to shatter the fact, and re-create the manuscript; to make an illusion of the loss, and truth of the mental restoration. But the validity of matter, and the impotence of such a will as mine, sunk deep—the sense of dependence upon bodily things. . . . I could not set in motion the usual methods of parcel recovery. I could not find any one; seemed to lack the face to tell any one. The story had the stain of first refusal upon it; but that did not spare me, since it brought back my primary failure as a workman. I wanted to go home, but had nothing to get there with, and nothing to take with me, but wreckage. . . . Late that afternoon, somewhere far uptown, I sat down under a tree to rest. A policeman rapped the soles of my shoes with a stick. One after another the hideous thoughts came back—that I had lost for a moment.

I had five cents, saved to get downtown, but was so athirst that I could not spend the nickel for fare, and drank a glass of beer with it. Then I made for the mystic group. They were gathered under the lamp when I came. They cared for me, loaned me enough to get back to Detroit. . . . Within a month the manuscript was done over, and sold as a novelette. I was getting very well acquainted with Pelee and poor St. Pierre.

Six or seven short stories came well after that—as if I had mastered something from the

novel and its misery. This series of tales was done, each in a week; each story was better than the one before. I dislike to confess it, but my work was better for the renewal of meat-eating; at least, the product of that state of growth, was better. The last of this series of stories was named *The Mystic of the Wars*—and was sold for what seemed a very high price to me. It comes to mind because it contained the germ of a later novel that changed my affairs. Penelope and the little girl and I—spent the winter in one of the Kentucky dry towns; and the next summer in a cottage on Lake Huron. Neither change cost any more than living in Detroit, but there was a saddle filly, which I had dared to buy in the bright drinkless days of the Kentucky winter.

I made the journey back from the Lake to bring up this love of mine. A halt in Cincinnati on the down-journey had such a disordering effect that I fell to drinking. The return journey by freight, covering a week, was pure panhandling; tramps and whiskey all the way. Though it was late in May, the weather had turned bitter cold. One of the older roadsters was good to have for company. I recall his squirming into the straw for a nap, as a mother dog would do, placing the straw in handfuls across his knees; taking off his coat and drawing it over him for a cover. He said it was warmer so.

"You can trust us old fellers," he said. "You're safe to go to sleep when I'm awake, but don't take any chances with the second-growths. Them kids'll knife a man for a few dimes."

It was true. I was safe with the old man there—though a dozen passengers climbed in and out. It seemed almost incredible after that week—so long and dreadful was the exposure and degradation—that I should emerge suddenly into all that was light and pure. So was it always, coming home. . . . I was now established as a periodical drunkard. Two or three times that summer, this weakness became strength, reaching, indeed, a self-destructive strength; which Penelope understood, watched and prevented. . . . Late that Fall, a little boy came to us. I walked the streets of that lake town, near the hospital, throughout the hours of the night. They told me that all was well. But I knew all was not well. I seemed to know this little boy; as if I owed him some great obligation and he had come to demand his own. I knew him as I knew myself, and that we must work out our problem together; that I could not give him anything until I was a man. I wondered if I should ever be a man. Not with my strength alone. I had tried that and failed. In two months more I would be thirty years old. All my life of evil had wronged the little boy. I had not been fit to be his father. I did not find any faith in my-

self nor any promise of strength, but prayed that the little boy would not have to go my roads.

There was to be no drinking after I was thirty years old. As the period drew near, something prevailed upon me to make haste. One evening I went out saying I would be back at ten o'clock. Caught in the lower ways, the night and the next day passed. When I reached home again, Penelope said: "As good as your word." The clock was striking ten. . . . I had to have morphine to get through the birthday reaction, but held good for several months.

In the early summer I met R. W., a dear-hearted fellow who was promoting timber lands in the northwest. Girls loved him at once, for he was a joy-bringer, a singer and humourist, who could quiver with three separate infatuations in a night, and sleep like a log until noon, forgetting a pleiad of appointments. I went to New York with him, when everything was down at home, and my thirtieth year concentration broken. . . . The experience was hard, but valuable. A sort of world-review was given me. We reached New York, with less than a dollar between us—took the town, from the same angle of nothing-to-lose. R. W. got into a coterie of capitalists and made himself felt at once; and I, (preyed upon by the fear of not being able to muster hotel expenses at the end of the week,) sold a story at the first strike.

For six weeks I saw the night-life, as it can only be bought. R. W. was in love with a famous actress. Her big heart opened to his lavish offerings, and to his bosom companion. . . . I left the hotel at the end of the first week, and took a little room in Forty-fourth Street. There I would write during the days—pure third-floor-back atmosphere—and emerge to the games of the gilded at night.

The actress-lady went up to Hartford. R. W., his pockets creaking with hundred dollar bills, decided one mid-evening to see her that night, instead of the next day. The only way was by special-train, which he chartered.

The days righted me. I think I was lost less than a fortnight in the illusions of the city's brightest. . . . It was not worth working for—even to this thirsty one. The actress-lady's whole atmosphere was a sustaining adulation; she breathed in praise and plenty. Yet she was not rich nor happy. She saw that I saw this; thought I must be different, because I saw it; that I must be wise and good and worth while. I showed her it was not so. Another trinity—we went down to the Jersey shore on Sundays, played at being children—New York, the hideous schoolroom, behind—as if there could be a trinity here below. . . . She was brave and lonely and very sweet. I saw the stage through her, and her friends.

Also I saw that you can buy for one dollar on Eighth Avenue, what you pay ten for on Broadway; that what the world called greatness in this woman was but a mummery, that her real greatness was her passionate longing for reality. They have that vaguely on Eighth Avenue, too. I had it vaguely.

R. W. was caught in the illusion. He would say that it was not so, but his conduct proved otherwise. Even with thousands, he could not bring the lady nearer. Yet he would not have thought of going to her without the crutch. . . . The city gives one strange but artificial strength. I moved and lived and worked—without sleep, kept up somehow, as I could not have done in the home-quiet. Once I broke out in white welts on my arms and breast. There was maddening prickle to them, that pulled out sweat from every pore. The two were frightened. R. W. was calling a physician, when an old Irish maid who served the lady, looked at my arms.

"It comes from whiskey, shure," she said. "It goes with the same. Hould still and I'll rub some on, sorr."

She was quite right.

I sold a novelette for five hundred dollars during the last week. I shall always like A. L. S. who bought it. I had not expected it to go; indeed, I am surprised now. My usual market for such things had refused it. I had determined

not to go home penniless this time. Here was the chance. The Trinity was breaking—but that is not my story. . . . I did not go home penniless, but very worn and done out, from what New York had given and taken. Penelope and the little girl stood by the gate in the station—the same gate where my mother stood, straining to find her own, in the skeleton-soldier son. A year afterward R. W. was brought in there, lying in a beautiful box of flowers. The City had taken what it could of the rest.

24

UNDER-WORLD

I STOPPED to think one night, finding myself giving way to another novel attempt. It was a more serious matter than the writing. We were deeply in debt. There was no use trying to carry on any other work; only useless added strain in that.

"It will take three months," I said to Penelope. "Everything will stop. A fine job for me, but you'll catch it hard down-stairs meeting those we owe. It will be a squeak to live through, but I've got a big story."

She might have said, "You always say that." She might have recalled the four or five former times in which I set out and put through a hopeless novel, only to fall farther behind the world. Instead she said:

"Do your book."

My saddle-horse was "half eaten up," at the boarding-stable, when the task began. I worked mainly in three sessions daily, riding an hour or so after the first one in the morning. Mid-way,

the thing went faster and faster. The second half of a book usually requires onethird the time of the first. I remember one midnight toward the end, starting in again for a run of two thousand words, fast and steadily as I could write, with hardly an edit afterward. Mainly a happy time for me, but there was a continual haste and tension to finish, that drained as much as the story. Work that a man loves never kills; it is excessive stimulation or outside worries that wear the worker down. Deep replenishment comes with pure work; one enters, one after the other, into different planes of power. The brain and body become trained and plastic to the rush of the output. There is a second wind, and a third wind. I have done a day's work often toward the end of a long task, that would have brought me to the craze of fatigue in the beginning. There is always a moment in a story for me, when the thinking ends, and the thing finishes itself; and always a difference of outside opinion as to which part is better. A longer and more intense training is required to produce in this trance of expression; yet, it is my conviction that in such work alone is the cohering line preserved.

The mornings are dear to me in which I rise from the machine to find six or seven pages of copy beside it—left almost like a gift upon the doorstep—the substance of which is almost as new to me when I read it another time, as the

work of another man. According to my inability to remember certain portions of copy, more often than not, are their value. The pages that stand to the end, uncut and uncorrected,—are those which seem scarcely to have touched memory, and which came without conscious brain-effort. I used to say that I had to be just so tired in order to do the best work, meaning that I had to be "worn thin" to be sensitive enough. We are not important while the body keeps the brain glowing with rush-messages of desire; we have not reached pure expression while the intellect imperiously dictates method and conduct.

There was an old priest who served men in Siberia. Around him in that bleak winter land, were the best and worst of the Russian empire. He tended the sick, and prayed with them; brought food, cut wood, procured medicines, watched with the dying, prepared the dead. A certain young Red came out to the colony and observed the priest's manner of life.

"Father," he said finally, "I should think you would lose your soul in the midst of such misery and evil and darkness—as our life here is made of."

The old man leaned back and looked at the ceiling, shutting his eyes.

"Well now, that's queer," he said presently, "I had almost forgotten that I had a soul."

He was a living soul. . . . We are not conscious of what we are, but of what we are not; of what we wish to be. That which we are, we perform, we breathe, and show others. Through service, the priest had made the transfer of consciousness from the mortal to the immortal, and in the purity of his giving, he did not realise that he was not as other men.

Just as we take a better picture when we have forgotten the photographer; just as we make the deepest impression upon our friends in moments of selflessness, so are we at our best, when held in rapt expression of the greater life within.

I touched only the threshold of such hours, in the doing of this particular long story. I wanted the personal hall-mark upon every page; I went after *strength* consciously; I had an eye to the market. I drank nothing during this work, but much coffee and smoked prodigiously. It was these, and the worry, not the work, that wore me down to pallor and thinness and treacherous nerves.

Very often Penelope talked to one creditor at the back-door while, at the front, ringing impatiently another stood. One time I went downstairs to find her explaining to a Scotchman why it would do harm, and no possible good, if he should turn off the gas. I was three months behind on the rent; the desk at which I worked was taken away. . . . R. who helped me with the

copying in the evenings didn't expect anything for the present. Everywhere Penelope was consummate.

I said toward the end, "Either I'm crazy, or I've got a big thing." There was no doubt about the "bigness" when I was at work; but away—I was afraid. I sent it to a publishing house that I knew could not handle it as advantageously as others—but because there was a surer acceptance. . . . The fact is, I was very tightly drawn. I could not have withstood a refusal; something would have broken. There wasn't another book or story in me when I finished. Only one thing could set me right; that was the answer I had concentrated on for thirteen years.

The public I feared less than the publisher. I was willing to let the book go under a handicap; expected nothing in review, but I did sense that the public would give me the answer. It was a ten years' book. It had the best moments of field, failure, emotionalism, and my knowledge of what was what in fiction. It is true that I had reversed on war; that my hero saw war as I saw it now, not as I had seen it in the field; yet I had no thought of writing other than a man's book.

All that I felt about this book, I had felt before and failed with; still I was very weak not to dare to take a higher chance. The same weakness made me whimper to Penelope ten days afterward, when I was nearly dead from drink:

"I've done all I can in the game. I *am* done. It will help the book, if I go out. The book will take care of you."

I did not want to hear that I should ever do better work. . . . I did not know then so well as now, that even without the hideous excitation of alcohol, a sudden stopping of high-pressure work is dangerous to body and brain. I was nearly blind when the answer came—in three close-lined pages. I held them to me, and drew from the thick quantity of writing that the book was wanted. That was all I could see or endure then. I took the pages to the back-room of a saloon and sat hours. There was one bad spot, it was said; and an enumeration of smaller changes suggested. But over it all was the sense that came to me that the literary office saw a big book, rather well-done. The manuscript came back for corrections. I placed it in the saloon safe, until I could get sufficiently organised to do the final work. There were three or four days in which whiskey showed me new lengths of cruelty, its mastery established. Always at a certain stage, the crocodile was with me.

The emendations and re-write were done in a day—one wobbly, weaving, weak-minded day—then I sank again. It was now May. I had written every moment toward fall publication, but was told that the book could not be brought out until early spring. I fought shriekingly at

this, but it did not avail. My contract was signed, and acceptance of the poorest possible terms made, as a matter of course in a first book. Two months elapsed before I emerged from this next to last pit. Doctors, friends and all who knew, declared I could never live through another.

The saddle-horse had been sold for feed bill; everything was down, and Penelope ill. From July to November, I worked upstream on the short stories, but broke again, at the coming of another little boy. . . . One day I fell, walking down-stairs—the lurch of an overtested heart. . . . There was utter demoralisation of body, mind and spirit. . . . I would rouse, not from sleep, but from some treacherous cessation of consciousness to find the crocodile in the bed with me, anywhere,—his dank muddy smell in my nostrils. All the cruelties of my life passed in review—to child, animal, self; all the shames, all character-less actions and off-key utterances. I was in the senses, a-sway in the senses, a helpless victim of the forces that surround the sensualist. I learned the different planes of desire—the real under-world which is out of the body. I drank night and day; expected death momentarily; drank when my heart throbbed, shaking the place where I lay, as a ship when the seas sink from the screws; drank when my heart was so weak that I could not feel its life; drank when I could

not retain the drink, but gained strength from it, through repeated swallowings. I was a lie in every thought; every atom of individual stamina which colours a man's utterance and makes him of the slightest value, was deadened. I was not only afraid of locomotor ataxia, but believed that it had come.

This campaign has also been written. I brought a fiction character through these stages, from the beginning, when work dropped from him, into and through one of the nights such as I passed. I was closer to it than now; to all the low motions of dissolution and body-preying. Only a few need such a narrative, perhaps; I felt that it must be done, for I had earned the authority. There is this difference: that which to the story-figure was one climacteric night or horror—was mine through fifty nights.

This I know: Had I died in one of those nights, there would hardly have been a change in my condition of consciousness, until the realisation that I lacked a vehicle to express and satisfy the desires, of which I was almost entirely composed. Instead, then, of being a body obsessed with evil forces, I should have become one of the evil forces seeking to satisfy my desires through the besotted flesh of others.

However, this is not a lasting condition—no hell is, because hell does not deal with our immortal parts. Nature rids herself of these un-

clean and destructive forces in due time, just as a spadeful of putrid matter is cleansed by the earth. Very clearly it appears to me, that such a dynamo of desire, denied a body, would finally cease to be, through natural disintegrating processes. Of course, the primal instinct of such a desire-galvanism would be toward identifying itself with another body, but this could only come to pass through a corresponding element of degradation in the human mating that would give it birth.

The establishment of order and aspiration in the human relations of men and women would result in the clean-up of the under-world.

The final question comes: What would be the result of a life that ended under such low conditions? Call it a bad pearl on the string, but one bound to fall away in due time because of its flaws. Certainly the real life-line has come too far, too long, to suffer extinction through a few years of failure and perversity. Still there is a tragedy about it. It would all have to be done again, without a renewal of power. We are here to strengthen the line—finally to fix an immortal identity. That is the unparalleled transaction, and any delay is tragic. A necklace of pearls—and one at last to be a jewel, not of reflected, but of intrinsic light.

It was good G. W. and his lady who came finally to our house and told Penelope what to

do. My mother borrowed money on the lower Lincoln property, and I was taken away to the cure. I remember demanding that the manager of the sanatorium assure me again and again that the treatment would not "affect the brain." Finally he mildly asked, "What of months of whiskey-whipping night and day, in relation to the brain?" . . . It's all a blur. I dove down twenty-two brass-covered steps the first night, and broke the door at the bottom with my head. I was disappointed to "come to" . . . They began to wrench me free. It was a fight. Not until the sixth day did they take the whiskey away. I think I meant to fool the doctor, when he gave me my last drink, but I didn't. That was four years ago from this day's work. I had a hundred and twenty needle-punctures in my arm when I left, beginning to be a man again. There was another glad homecoming (as if I brought back the treasures of the Indies) from my mother and Penelope and the little ones. I had hardly seen that new little boy. . . . A month later the novel appeared.

25

MARKET PLACE

I WENT through the book hurriedly, in the fear of finding some error that would spoil it at the last. It was not spoiled, but as I left it; the emendations of that pitiful day stood up strangely well. *Boy* was strongly in it—but something of the best of the ten years. I was glad to finish reading; have not read it since.

I expected nothing critically, very little prestige from my publishers; but my heart listened for some vague indefinite answer from the public. In the early reviews I looked for scorn; my eyes so expectant of scorn, that I seemed to find it in the easy lines of praise. Drilled to defeat, I could not think of any critic, or one connected editorially in any way, liking the work. I held fast against the first fine liking. "I have not my right mind," I suspicioned. "This is a conspiracy. The sanatorium has hurt me." I studied the faces of people who looked at me. More and more came in—high ungrudging

words—the critical result no longer tentative, a result that could not be transposed into sinister meaning; finally an envelope of really important reviews—from periodicals that I expected at best, but a scornful or patronising line; then the quantity, ringing the one good promising note—scores and scores of columns.

This was the drink from the world that I had thirsted for from the beginning. The matter of sales was a small sordid thing compared. From March to July, the book never moved in the stores; and then Edwin Markham's recommendation of it for the Nobel prize, stirred it into a thing of sales. By Christmas, there had been eight editions, and I had a book of importance to the trade.

This is the point: I was detached from the story before it was published. I felt that the critics, even though they had saved my life, were very generous. Yet had it failed, it seems now that I must have softened to the markets; that I should have been forced to retain my publisher by writing for markets, instead of for myself.

I was doing another book, of course, straining as never before; having refused outright to do another war-book. I worked in deep humility; so deep that there was perhaps a strain about that. I was not quite well, but felt I was never so strong as in this writing. I rode downtown with Dr. McK. in one of the winter days of the

second book's finishing, seven or eight months after the sanatorium. He inquired about the periods in which the thought of drink came back.

"But they don't," I said.

He was silent, a bit sceptical about the gold-cure's efficacy.

"You must have been ready to stop."

"I was ready long before—but lost the sense of the advantage. I mean it all looked different when that whisky tension came."

"Don't you have that tension now?"

"No."

"Do you mean that you haven't had a fight, since you came home?"

"Exactly that."

He was a wise good man, so that I dared say what was in my mind. Yet I spoke hesitatingly, with a sense of the delicacy of the thing:

"Doctor, I think when a man stops and his real self comes back with restored confidence, there is a certain spiritual replenishment. I have never thought of asking to be perfectly well physically again, but I think my head is all right. I have had days of work in the last month that seem to make me sure of that—"

He saw the happiness, and understood that it had not been easy for me to tell him.

"You think you are at your best now. In three or four years you will begin to know what

real replenishment means. You'll be all right physically, too."

A gust of joy came from the words. We had stopped before his downtown office. He liked the novel and spoke of it now. I knew what he was thinking, and laughed as I said:

"You think the book gave me something that took the place of alcohol, don't you?"

"Yes, strong medicine for any head."

"Don't you think I'll get up the hill with it?"

I can't recall his answer.

In the second book, I put the drink chapter, and many other things which I did not then know so well. It was done in the din of the first; literally my answer to the many who said: "You'll never do another book so good as that." This angered me, possibly gave me a bit of toppiness which said, "I'll show 'em." Yet in my work, I was thankful and ardent. I wanted many things—to do a thousand times better, to do a novel such as no man ever did, but it was not the same old burning.

I brought war in from the field to a man's heart —war, such as I knew from myself. Far finer workmanship is required to portray the fight of a man to be decent, or the progress of a man coming in to his vision, than that required for the rudimentary games of the open. We are given devils as we go, and those are very common and unevolved devils, which require only muscle,

metal and wrist to overcome. That is the boy's part; war, a boy's game, but the devils which test and train men, are more worthy of fighting and reporting.

I was too close to reality. I tried to employ all the colour that one might use in handling a fifty mile battle-front in this fight of the animal and angel in man. I found that the people who could regard with calm appreciation the blood and the shame and the suffering of remote battle-lines, could not look upon the ape and the tiger and the parrot in their own natures. I had found here in America a sex-conflict of deeper significance than any foreign conflict of armed men; at the same time, I found that the training of a war-writer was not pure training for this subject. I brought realism, and not the mellowing of insight to the down-pull of desire, and the lifting force of spirit.

A man is not more poised amid the hatreds of reaction, than in the destructiveness of the evil itself. The reformer, lately reformed, can never touch but a certain grade of consciousness. To those who have found themselves, he is often as obscene as the chaos. My second book was a very important failure. In spite of long years at the anvil, I needed consummately just what I got—a thorough "*panning*" from most of the critics who counted. The small disagreement did not blind me at all. Had it not been for

the first, there would have been no immediate demand for the second.

I did some intense living in those weeks. It seems I brought into this life something exceptionally crude. You may have seen it long ago, but it is something for me to suspicion it now, since it is intrinsic. Recently I found a startlingly deep bit of criticism of a later book, by H. V. D. in a Denver paper:

"It is the instinct of the serf that grips this hero. He is an under-dog that has thrust his muzzle up into the clearer atmosphere of the world. The earmark of class is still strong upon him, however; his instincts are servile."

I believe H. V. D. has touched life. This may have been half the reality of the shames of my early years; and at the bottom of my need for long and severe grinding in order to get anywhere.

It was a certain power that I burned with, but raw power; and it met rebuke that it deserved. Had I possessed the fineness which I have admired in many men and women, whose lives have passed in house and garden comparatively, I would have clipped that second book to the bone before turning it loose. Yet in justice I cannot but say, that much of the fineness of men is a trained world-surface. Shut a man in a room with pencil and white paper to learn what he is.

I fought it out and found my place in the

world again. This was a valuable period, for the hour was reached when I could say: A most important thing for a writer to learn is that he has no concern with praise; and no concern with blame, except when it comes from an insight superior or comparable with his own; that a man loses his critical faculty in a book, unless that faculty is of *characteristic* development; finally that it is good to take a beating in the market-place, for something not learned at home.

I added to all this in time, that a writer's business is with his manuscript, and not with the mechanically multiplied product; that when something said about the latter hurts, it is because there is a lesson to be learned—just as a weak muscle reveals itself in pain at the end of a strong exertion of the body. . . . In a word, I drew from the first book a certain aliment that I was dying for—strong, against nature, deadly if the vitality of man does not supply quick toleration, but essential at that itme. The second, and its critical rebuke—together with the years of weathering and the good days that had come—set me right to begin again. It could not have been designed better.

My mother's vitality was being marvellously renewed. I think she was as happy in the first answer as I. Penelope was happy in the brightened house. To her there was no astonishment. This answer had been deserved for years, in her

view. The world had been stupid not to give it before. Indeed, she had said as much to a pitying neighbour on one of the darkest nights of our lives. She wore the author-business as lightly as the littlest boy.

26

FICTION-MIND

IN my early publishing relations I found that certain illusions must die; in fact, I met the actual substance of trade. Harrowings resulted, but structural experience as well. The lives of these men were not my life; it was difficult for us to understand each other. We talked slowly and carefully—as in an uncertain language—returning hastily to near and sensible objects to make thoughts clear; I realised plainly at length that men who multiply a product by machinery must get their joy of living, if they can, outside of their work; and that I, at my best at home in the study, did not belong to these methods and manners. There are natural publishers, as well as writers by nature, but I merely met the business at first. Often when I failed utterly to touch their point of view, I thought of O. C. and the Shipbuilder who wanted his speech reported in his own paper. I observed that we were on the opposite sides of the mountain. I confess at first, the

stamina of standing alone went from me; the something, thought to be unwhippable, went out of my soul.

One night I went over to New York for dinner. In an artists' club, I met a lady. She had dined, but sat down at the table with me. That was at eight. At midnight we were still talking raptly there, the four hours untimed. She seemed Art and New York, and all that I was ready to know. Slightly older, of rare loveliness, she had that purity which came from her own nice balances of things, not from morals laid down. I hadn't realised the need of this meeting; yet in truth, I was like an empty wharf and she a fleet of ships coming home.

In earlier stages of workmanship, the man must find his types abroad. Those nearby, pursue their significant ways, unnoted. I had demanded battle-lines to challenge the youthful zeal; and here abroad in a foreign atmosphere, I felt suddenly empowered with the animation of the world's women. . . . I had not sought it; did not know how weary I was of men who had tramped and shouted so long over my consciousness.

I think of her now with the white phlox. One winter day afterward, on the way to her studio, I found a few tall new-flowered branches of *Charlotte Saisson* and brought them with me. We had tea and she placed them in a tall vase—

the table by a southern window—and sat opposite, very vivid in the grey light. To her, flowers were profound emotions. Once I told her of some matters of this story that had not occurred in words before.

"That's the quality," she exclaimed suddenly. "Every little while I get just a touch of it from you—a leaf from the book that will never be—pure spiritual self-revelation. . . . No American could detach himself enough to produce such a book. Yet, it would be very real and valuable."

I seemed to know what she meant always, receiving a clear vision of the finished thing in her mind, and a thrill of eagerness to begin at once. . . . One day I went to her after a dismal session with the publishers. I had been offered a contract, calling for a book to be written "on the lines" of the first novel, and had penned across it:

"I consider this immoral."

Very good, but the fact is, I faced a year of pot-boilers for the energy.

She listened, her face set.

"Oh, I know—I know," she said. "Do you think I haven't met such things?" She showed me work she had to do between time. "We all have to truckle. Most of us get too tired to fight on."

That day, all fear and irritation left me.

R. M. Bucke's book was in her studio. She had just been reading, and told me hastily of the spiritual adventures many memorable men have met in their thirties, as recorded in this book. Then and there as she talked, my third novel came to me—the hero, his mother, the woman he found finally, his friends and the world.

I shall speak of this book as *Bedient*, not referring to the book itself, but to the important period it represents in my production. Many realisations are grouped about this character, and are identified with that stolen year of freedom in which the work was written. Of course there is great joy in the moment of conception like this. I felt very cheap because a company of manufacturers had been powerful enough to depress me. The phlox lady saw that I was made over new once more; that the workman had been released from prison and given his shop again. But she did not listen steadily when I praised her.

"I'm a road-side cup. I am glad the traveller is refreshed. . . . Come again when the great task is done."

Her glow was upon all her friends whom I met. I saw, through her, the wonderful quality of the modern woman who refuses man as he is; who holds to the ideal and turns her energies, denied motherhood, into the service of other women's children. . . . Personally she loved

beauty more than service; personally she would have preferred children of her own, to the vision which gave her such deep scorn for the things as they are. She saw none of the resplendency in the nuns of the world which so thrilled me—because she was one of them—a cup to refresh the traveller, reminding him of his work when he would tarry, a passionate mother of the forlorn. . . . Sometime I mean to take my little girl to her, and leave her for a time.

The happiest summer I had ever known now began. I had used every bit of surplus to pay old debts; the little that came, we managed to make enough. When it waxed too hot for work in my attic study, I took a little house in the fields—a five-mile ride from the city. I never could keep out of the saddle, and this brought a utility to exercise that made it doubly enjoyable. The morning rides over the country roads, the illusion of the book's reality as it grew (and there is always such an illusion); sunlight, rain and daily roadside changes; happiness at home, the occasional buoyancy of old-time health; and over all the absolute disregard of market, publisher and critic in relation to the work at hand—these, and the adorable quality of the quiet air, made of that summer's work a memorable adventure.

I came at times very close to the oneness of

life and task; I achieved leisure which is out of the question in a city study; there was a continual gladness in the ease and length of hours—until my horse began to nicker for dinner. Occasionally I went back in the afternoon. Often I thought of Penelope and the children and my mother, from this little distance. Often I saw meanings of the day before, in the quiet of the Field-house. There was time for everything. Often I let an hour run by in thinking; the strain of the whole life relaxed. I put much that I perceived and aspired to, in the day's work upon the character of *Bedient*, for this was a book done to please myself, but there were many by-products. During this summer, my first real insight into the character of the fiction-mind appeared.

Beware of what you want with a hard and steady passion. You will likely get it, and then you will learn whether it is good or not. As a boy and young man, I wanted the fiction-mind. I was willing to sacrifice all pleasantness and simplicity to attain it. The story-teller with his pack pleased me in ideal—the man who *made* his creatures, and who called the blessings of a tired world upon himself, for entertainment furnished.

I had laboured and concentrated and produced long and faithfully toward the end of achieving the fiction-mind. Something striven for with this energy, does not die more easily than it

comes. Was it a good thing—this that ambition had made me?

I regarded it. I saw in many men, not what they were, but what I wanted them to be. They were more interesting to me, as I saw them with the fiction-mind. I wove in and around and through them, something that was not theirs. When I thought of them, they came partly in my garments. All events that ran through my mind, used a path of my own making, not of truth, not of fabrication exactly, but a path between the two, of fiction-formation.

I, as a man, was not clear of it. I could acquit myself of no decent performance for another, without seeing myself in the action, and perceiving myself as a literary possibility. I could not utter a cheerful sentence without the sense of listening to it, nor meet a fellow-spirit without taking away, reconstructing, or at least disordering the conception, because of this literary possibility. I could not kneel down to pray without the consciousness of this third eye, this damnable literary busybody, examining the posture or commending the purpose.

When one gives, or loves, or prays self-consciously there is an abomination upon the outpouring. I began to perceive the haunt of the artistic, my slavery to effects. Sincerity was not in this consciousness; nor simplicity. Purity was a stranger to it. It was fiction, indeed.

A man's character is the hill rock. No one will quarrel with that. We build character by being true to ourselves;—blessings upon the head of V. O. B.—by ceasing to lie to ourselves. The whole truth to others is simple, compared to the integrity of self. The constructive and enduring quality of a man's work depends upon his character. All fancied subtleties and studied effects are of the charlatan and the mountebank. We know the lie of the thing we try to force across.

Rely upon it, there is no excuse for being, other than an expression of life as we see it. There is nothing more sorrowful nor unlovely, than playing a part. Even sickness of the body comes from it. A man commits moral discord when he bends his back to catch the acclaim of the gallery. A man's business is to express himself.

So I had paid a price in attaining the fiction mind, such as it was. There was much to tear down. I saw that the meaning of all work, was to build the structure of man; that the work itself was but a scaffolding; that any fancied appeal to others is a lie to the self.

This was good; the past was all right that enabled me to come to this point; all good—swamp, mesa, tundra and height. I saw that there was a grand clarity to attain, not the inland lake clarity of simple consciousness such as the

peasant has, but the oceanic clarity of seership. I saw a man may move through the dark swiftly, past every pitfall, when he rises to meet all things face to face, and gives himself, unlying, unafraid. I understood at last that the sanction of friends, the love of women and the smile of the divine ones, comes in answer to this integrity.

Those were clearing days of quiet in the Field-house. Pent air seemed to blow out of mind; freshness came in with the stillness. I was two years away from the sanatorium, but it seemed to me much farther. I was grateful to the source and scheme of things, and caught the first actual glimpse of what I seemed really meant to do—to show the breaking forth of the self-man into the world-man. *Ahead on the road are the world-men*—how that sentence rang. It was incandescent to my mind.

We are strangely identified with the things which prevail as most important for us to accomplish. *Bedient* was my first conscious attempt to portray the passage from self to service; yet when I surveyed past work I found that the same was expressed everywhere. The ideal of the old Siberian priest, serving blindly, without knowing it, and all the time, was evidently deeper than brain.

Of course it is much better to serve men in this way than to talk about it; but the fact is, we become rhythmic with such grandeur here in

the flesh, first through a mental conception of its lofty quality, and then through long aspiration. It is human to talk by the way.

I remembered now the travels with my grandfather, and the deep effect upon me of the so-called "conversions" of the men and women of the fields, to whom he preached. I felt the contagion as a child, yet could never quite reach abandonment. There was something resplendent about those flashes in the pan, after all; even though scandals followed the loving of one another. We called it fanaticism—those first fires which made the simple folk cry aloud that they were sanctified. Yet they have their place in the simpler consciousness; they are suggestions on the plane of the physical emotions, of what has come to saints and workmen of the past, who have attained the upland slopes of the spirit; indeed, it has come to all the great productive servers of men. That which is but a fusing of emotions in simple consciousness, often to the scorn of the world, is an inkling, nevertheless, of the splendid fusing of the mortal and immortal in man, which the bo-tree symbolises and the descent of the dove, and the road to Damascus.

All the progress of the individual is toward this liberation of consciousness; this transfer of the office of consciousness from the animal to the angel; the fusion in one being, of the divination of woman with the militancy of man; the union of

spirit and flesh which means the end of self-consciousness and the beginning of world-consciousness; finally which means the glorious integration of spiritual life that prompted the inspired Lao-tze to say to his people: "I shall be standing at the Gate until the last one has passed through!" and brings the same immortal significance to the words of Jesus: "Lo, I am with you always—even unto the end of the world."

I saw that all men and women, after the stress and complication, should come to a place of peace like this Field-house which I had found. The end of the body will achieve it for a time in many cases, but it is needed in the body. The voice of the many is the voice of the devil. The real self is lost in the city, lost in the herds and hives of men. We reach a time when we must have this peace or die; we are allowed to wait too long.

I was beginning to hear my real self there in the Field-house. Glad fulness was about. Those at home saw me happy and different. Inner life was awake. The real self was finding expression, the instrument of it had begun to listen. Men in the city cannot do that, for silence and solitude are needed. They hear each other. Their brains are jammed with sounds—other men's words, things heard, read or laboriously learned, heavy materials actually collected by the brain. No man is an individual until he begins

to express the real self. He's of the herd and hive. The entire richness and variety of his wretchedness is to whip him out of the hollows and vagueness of light. You can't hear the real self until you get the din of other people, and other people's truck, out of the brain. That's all there is to mastery—to achieve the stillness and listening; that's the ecstasy of the immortals. One clear sentence from the real self, and you are never the same afterward. You are an Individual.

I would sit there in the doorway, and fall into a contemplation of the light—until sounds and the sunlit beauty were farther and farther, and I was at peace—all in fine rhythm with the world. . . . I knew that I lived—I knew that I was a living man; that I could stand alone. I knew that *if* I could hear exactly what the real self was saying—the product would be constructively new and unerringly right.

It's all true,—what the prophets and saviours came to earth to tell men. We've each got powers undreamed of. I saw why I had suffered so, why I had hated so. It was because I had lived and moved in selfishness, in the blindness and fog of other lives. It is the herds that suffer and die in the dark. I had climbed a step above what I had been, so that I could see the squirming greeds and lusts. Nearly everything

I had ever done was a sort of random snatching or spiteful reprisal—the whole sorry business a leaning upon others. I began to see clearer what I should do to-morrow, how to do it well, quickly, painlessly to others.

Many thoughts came to me like these:

A man is clean alone, if he is clean at all.

It isn't being a superman to learn to listen to the real self—just the beginnings of manhood proper.

A man is either a constructor, or a slavish conserver of others' ideas. He doesn't know how great he is, until he has learned to listen.

The mind of man is like a publishing house—presses pounding away with routine pamphlets, statistical hedgings and parliamentary junk—while a divine eternal poem is ready and waiting in type.

The individual counts in this world; the individual must be served. He does not remain long a machine's assistant; he does not continue to pluck fruits from a wheel. It is the individual who has his way; who refuses to be wronged and trampled, and who chooses where and how he shall bring forth his kind. The individual is a man who hears himself. I don't mean a man-crusher; not a man who rises on the necks of other men. He doesn't hear a real self, but an ugly animal instinct. It is not a way of greed. The

pitch and depth of greed is back in the crowd; indeed it can only exist where souls are grouped. This is a way of compassion.

Three lines from Jacob Bohme stood out in my thinking. In the midst of his philosophy which went so high, he exclaimed, "It is not I who write these things. This that you see is but a simple-minded and foolish old man. These things are of the love of God."

I learned well there in the Field-house that this "love of God" only comes to a man's soul, when love for his fellow man goes forth. . . . It is a kind of prayer, this listening; a man must make good his fine thoughts with actions. It is power, a great gift, a receiving of creative force; its outpouring is service to men.

This is the substance of the matter: The real self will not associate with a man while he remains indecent.

27

INSURRECTIONS

THE *Bedient* manuscript had been read, before I followed on. I had been like a boy in a dream all the year; this was the awakening. Even the face of my friend at the advertising desk looked long and dour. "You must do a pure romance," he said. . . . I went from desk to desk—president, vice-president, sales department, literary department. It was all the same—a sort of "Let's forget the past—and you do a pure romance."

I would say clearing my voice:

"But what about the *Bedient* book?"

At every desk my answer was a frightened look that seemed to say, "For God's sake, are you going to force me to speak?"

The fact is, they didn't speak at once. I was falling—falling—there was no end to the distance down. I had an idea for a love episode, which though new and very fair to me, might be incorporated without hitting the nerves of the lazy-minded. I arranged to do this and left.

By mail came to me the report on the *Bedient* book. The main criticism from the publisher was that *Bedient* was "illegitimate."

The word is theirs.

One sentence of the letter was this:

"You may perhaps have overlooked the fact that we are endeavouring to guard you against criticism."

I thought of the man from the literary department being called on a matter of mine to the head office while I sat there—the man who had told me so many times what to write next and how to do it—and how he stood now in that room—rocking on his toes, sweating, embarrassed, his whole face and manner an apology for the space he used and the air he breathed in that presidential place. And he would spare me from criticism.

Finally, I thought of *Bedient's* mother, of her baby, of the shame of children incident to, and punishment for, debauched sexual appetites—the marriage of it—the male idea of it—the whole sorry jungle business—and that this, and its word "illegitimate"—should rise to guard me from criticism.

It was hard to get humour working for a day or two.

This is the old agony of the producer meeting the manufacturer. The latter gets the product first. His opinion hurts because it is the first,

because the workman is still hot with it, still psychically connected with his work. And then, it is so often the way of commerce to belittle a product before the contract is signed and to exalt it afterward. *Bedient* remained "illegitimate."

Now there was in *Bedient's* handling, certain vagueness that came from imperfect thinking; and I confess to moments in which I fancied myself writing for the elect. I should have failed for this impertinence, but it did not taint the whole effort. A man of my life, writing "for the elect,"—there's a real touch. Buffeted about the planet as I had been—I who had heard the Russians sing, touched the yellow hand, and lain with the crocodile—I, of the hundred maimed homecomings, writing for the elect; forgetting the triumphant fact that the spirit of things must have matter to express through—at least, here, between Venus and Mars.

But there were better moments in which I tried to make of this book—one fluent solution of physical action, mental authority and spiritual insight. In fact, this formula was conceived in that writing, and remains as a novelistic ideal. I mean by this, to do my work—so that the man who runs may get his story; so that the mind which delights in intellectual emotions may draw his values; and from the same pages to supply a strong inner vitality, significant to one who brings to the reading a spiritual penetration. Of

course, this is setting oneself a task. It is much simpler to be cryptic than parable-clear. Still I have the conviction that with clean-cut thinking in matter, one need sacrifice no dimension whatever. It is not half so wonderful a thing to have a sizeable equipment as to be able to use it.

My training is still far from complete to carry out this formula; but it becomes clearer and clearer that there is nothing worth reading, regarding or listening to, in the world of finer expression, that has not in it, the cohering-line, the visioning quality of the spirit. The workman must be first a spiritual consciousness, before his book or painting or symphony can live—for again, this consciousness is the immortal part of a man, as it is of a work. Moreover the workman can not perceive the relation of his physical experiences, nor individualise his mental realisations, until his consciousness is lifted above them. So much is established. All products, merely mental, are ineffectual as the squabbling of the Jews over the letter of past prophecy—while the living Christ walked in their streets.

A splendid influence for this transition was the critical flayings of my friend B. K. He said I tried to show the kernel without the husk; that I lacked the niceness of seeing soul and body, too, and had neglected to furnish bodies for the activities of my recent work. In the main, carolling from soul to soul is not good work, said B. K.

Moreover he said such things very well, and in a most important booth of the marketplace.

He was fine and right. The fact is, I was a bit weary at that time of the brute in man and woman. My early experiences had contacted so thoroughly the brute part of people—the sweat and strain and strike of flesh; the eating, wearing, desiring human creature. It was not that I did not know this creature, so much as that he bored me. I said to B. K.: "Let others write of him, if they like, if they love him. I am tired of brutes. I love that inner thing in man and woman—that is not of pounds. I have had too much of the pounds, and have turned against them."

This was a far fling in reaction, and as far from poise as the loss of self-control. B. K. flayed me with authority and grand good will. He helped me to lose weak ideas. He seemed to become a part of my own self-critical faculty.

An upper room class of young men helped to clear me. This came about through another class, to which this book is inscribed,—men and women of Detroit, the gift of years, who foregather with me winter Thursday nights. They furnish a quality that would bring out the best anywhere. We are accustomed to leave the monorail at once, and stop to breathe for tea about eleven, having completed the cosmic circle under a yellow lamp. They finish an idea while I am

using words to brace it; they require but a touch of fabric, or a hint of design, to get it all. One of the women said to me:

"This is very good for us, but you know war and drink, as you are beginning to know us. What you need now is a class of young men. I'll arrange it."

I had to finish sentences for the young men; bring ideas down to straight terms, and weave evenly the threads of thought. I had something to give, when I did that. I realised that I had as much business to write for the elect, as to do articles on mercantile efficiency; that every groove in my brain, worn from thwarted desire, the burn of ambition, the grind of poverty and personal deviltries—would fail in their purpose, if I lost my sense of touch with the crowd.

Before finally leaving this subject, I want to explain the temptation which comes to a man to work for the few. There is an ecstasy in the first view of one's unborn realisations; also there is a proportion of visionaries who love the moving of a dream better than any concrete expression. They will tell the rapt-eyed novice that his work is finished. It is easy for him to believe the sanction of another, when it fits exactly into his own state of growth. There are always disciples for the visionary. They see him whole, because they complete him with their own perceptive vitality. They supply the matter for his

figures of dream, but his world which he should be appealing to, does not know he lives. He fails to speak the language of men; the scorn of men does not become a whip to bring him down, because he is strong in the circle of his fancied elect.

There comes a time when a man must see that discipleship is an evil in itself; that a man may incorporate his story where he can, but not his individuality in other minds; for every man's individuality is his own sacred treasure.

It is well therefore for the workman to be alone, and to fail, if necessary, until he learns to put away his dearest appraisers; to check discipleship which weakens forming individuality; to make himself as nothing compared to what he has to say; and finally to give birth in flesh to his visions, in spite of those who love and praise him, saying that a fallen plume is the whole bird.

The workman has not finished because he sees the form of the result in the fusing metal. It must be anvilled in concrete intelligence and cooled for handling. His own emotions have all been spent from his product by this time, but he has ceased to work for personal thrills.

Many are the mystics who erected great gods, and failed to learn the first lesson of life: that spirit requires flesh to manifest, as man, and for man. The mystics dreamed marvellously, but only the greatest learned to write or paint well.

A writer must be a workman even in paradise. After the vision, he must come down and tell the story. Only having done that in the parlance of men—coherently, in the midst of men—has he earned the right to ascend, and disappear once more in the gleaming mists of Sinai.

Bedient, though kept from failure by the few who did not like him less because flesh fell from his figure from time to time, represents to me but an approach to the larger purpose. I see clearly that my world-man must be a man of flesh; that my training was not for an appeal to visionaries, but to men. There is ecstasy in visions—that's the heaven of it—but there is poundage to consider. The old story of the death of Lawton is recalled, that failed through fever, yet used all emotions.

The ecstasy of Columbus was at the first glimpse of the misty shore-line. Night fell upon his exaltation. It was a burnt-out old man who made the landing. Yet for us, the world, the landing is the immortal moment. His, the ecstasy of the shore-line, but the kneeling, the kiss of earth, is the victory we celebrate.

We have no right to the ecstasy of conception if we are unwilling to bear the pangs of nativity.

I did a romance the next year, and considerable short work; accepted the period as one of transition. A change in my business relations eased

the struggle. There had been two days to wait before the new arrangement could be made. During this period, I had the sense of failure almost as keen and deep, as when leaving the field before the battle of Liaoyang, for I had uncovered the money-disease in all its revolting nudity. At the sleepless end of the waiting, something said in my brain, not in thought, but actual words:

"*Calmness and cheer.*"

The new publishing arrangement was quickly and pleasantly finished. I regarded this as a truce to Poverty. In fact, my old friend Poverty seemed to say to me in passing:

"If you do well, you have seen the last of me. But you must continue to think the thoughts of a poor man. If you do not, all the contracts of men shall not prevent us from meeting again. It is an honour and a great good to be numbered among the poor men; to realise no thought of prodigality, apart from giving to others; to undertake no financial obligation except the briefest and most obvious, and to accept no sense of material well-being, until the last debt is paid."

My adventures with certain magazines during this year are interesting and laughable. I heard of one publication changing hands. It was said to have become a financed ideal, and I sent a story there. The editors wrote:

"We know that you have what we want, but frankly it is not your literary stories that will

suit us, but your red-blooded stories of action."

I did a story about a woman loving a man so well that she saw his work apart, and refused to make a domestic of him. The answer to this from a different market, was:

"To be entirely frank, we feel that the problems involved are not of sufficiently wide appeal to warrant our using it."

I began to look for that word "Frank." If you stop to think, you will find that a man may not be at his best when using it. . . . And always these letters were mitigated with a statement that the work was well done; and always I was suggested back to war things, to purely physical movements.

I perceived that certain writers who began to appear when I sold the first stories, were now writing to order—and stuff they would have been ashamed of then. I read another letter:

"There are many fine passages, but your action is nearly all internal, vital to a single ideal, the importance of which the great masses of readers will disallow. In all frankness, we are not permitted to judge of what is best to print, by the opinions of a few advanced spirits, however much we value such opinions. Personally I must be faithful to my own trust here."

I could do the stuff that was wanted in many cases, but it would have been easier had I staid

drunk. In many, not all, editorial offices, the producer is paid well and swiftly alone for that which is common; in which plots are pictured, and all but greedy imagination put to death, the aim being a sort of motion picture competition. The genuine worker encounters two distinct battles which concern his actual bread-winning; his early wares are refused because of lack of equipment, and his maturer product becomes impossible, because he gives too much. I saw that it was not enough for me to get down to the parlance of men, but to leave all hope behind—not only possible intellectual authority—but, by all means, any spiritual insight; that only "frank" down-writing would do.

An inquiry arose within myself as to how this aloofness had been reached. Many influences touched upon in this book suggest it, but there is one concrete peculiarity that occurred. In ambition and financial stress, a hundred times, at least, in early years, I had set out to *conform* for a story or two. I knew what was wanted, or fancied I did, and set out to make it according to this specification. Somewhere in the midst of each tale, I would lose the purpose. Something within would become animate, take the bit, and run away with the rest of the story. To me, it was invariably better than the first part, which had to be made over in the same zest—resulting usually in a refused story. This runaway led me

to the blessedness of Field-house days—to the occasional trance of production.

I glanced back at my training for work. For twenty-five years I had been writing, for I began in the old house. The years upon years of reverses which I had known, would have sensitised or ruined the brain of a musk ox. . . . I looked about. The world is wonderful, perpetually modern. Each man, scavenger or poet, holds stuff and to spare, for eternal epics. The fault is the workman's if he does not interpret them. I could see this now, but why? Because of the reverses. Every reverse had given me something; cinched some lesson to the brain-cells. Every failure was an added point of equipment, compounding upon the others.

What was the value of all this sensitising? To supply a quick sympathy and understanding for men.

I perceived that I had needed every reverse, every rejection, even in this late hour; that I could well afford to put from me every dribble of "success," better than a single one of the failures; that I had needed reverses, as flesh needs bone; that reverses clear the fat from the brain; increase the mental circuits; lend to the fibres that firm delicacy which alone can carry live hot emotions without blowing out, and big-voltage ideas swift and true to their appointed brightness of expression.

Commerce and the temporal need blind a man; he conforms because they seem so huge and inevitable. Writers conform just as soldiers and war correspondents conform to the great systems of war and imperialism. These huge obvious things are dragons by the way to test manhood. The stuff of death is in them. They are destined to pass, but the stuff of manhood shall not pass.

The workman must either fight or conform. That is a matter of the force that drives him. If he has the endurance to take the beatings of a double-decade, gathering force all the way and faith in the human spirit, it is against nature for him to fail to be heard. His knuckle shall reach the bell, and his people respond and vibrate to the stroke.

28

WHITE BLOOM

EVERY workman has his dream-girl. Mine had to do with the wonderful rocking-horse in lower Lincoln; she was the meaning of the House Opposite. . . . I remember bread and butter, upon which I had failed to balance preserves of a drippy sort. It overflowed its banks upon—whatever you would call the garment of a male child of three or four. I was speechless with distress, when she deftly explained to the rulers of the house that it was not my fault, since it "falled off all itse'f." That was Imogen.

She went away. A winter's afternoon, doctor's carriage before the house opposite, blue sign on her door—whispered tension among my people—an afternoon of shadowy indoors and early falling darkness, while I watched across the street—and the next morning, the white crepe.

The dream-girl did not really die. I remember leading her captive home from school by long yellow braids—the tall white Florence. She van-

ished in her house; and days afterward the white crepe signalled. . . . There was Adelaide sitting just in front in school—long eyelids, yellow curls, squeaking slate, and always the same little perfume. Twenty-five years afterward in a street car, with three little children—and she didn't know me. And S., whom I kissed at seven and at twenty-one—to find she wasn't the dream-girl at all.

Then the shutters were closed a long time. It is tragedy how the cycle ends in childhood; the angel vanishes, another spiral is begun,—enter the brute, for his man-handling. . . . Only in moments of great loneliness and defeat, did the goddess show herself in women of flesh. I thought of *my*self so much, gave so little. There was rapture of moments in Cincinnati in the warm-heartedness of Nell, as it was given to another city waif. . . . The woman of the strawberries—I had almost forgotten that first wonderful night, before any words. By the thrill of remembering, there must have been something immortal in that Longworth Street Gertrude, from whom the daylight faces turned away.

They have come and gone. Because of the white bloom about them, (which something within seemed to know) they are remembered—not for the world-creature that conforms and adjusts and placates. Neither have they anything to do with that dead self of wars and drink and desire,

though they came then, and are not seen now.

They are one's own. The hardest thing to learn is that each of us is identified only with a certain circle—small or great, according to the intrinsic gift of life and our freedom of its expression. We work for the great Abstraction—the world—yet when it is over, we have only found our own.

One night I was telling a company of people what a fool business war is. In my heart I knew it was being told very badly. I could find no sanction. They were strangers, who wanted to hear of the glory of war. A woman whom I had never seen before that night, played marvellously before I talked, and afterward. Finally she came to me, whispering:

"I think we are each trying to say the same thing."

She had sensed the whole sorry business, and added:

"We could be good comrades—just that—couldn't we?"

An adult, unafraid—she was tried on that saying. She could kiss a fellow-workman, yet remain pure stuff of comrades. She was great-hearted.

There was another woman who stood looking over the water, and she said this, like a moan to me: "It is hard—one of the hardest things we

have to learn—that we dare not be comrades with men."

And another stood waiting for a car, and looked down, tapping her boot in the snow: "So many parents are proud—as if they had helped and chosen and given themselves to some great beauty—when their children come unwanted, come all weary and bewildered." She had no children.

It isn't that men are not ready to see the greater things of women, but that life betrays them; the world hardens; systems that men have made darken the vision. Women cannot tell that which they are. Men must see, and men do not see, because life calls them constantly to contend with one another. They live in routine and different problems—and they bring this sordid training to the white presence of life. Men have demanded the body of women so long, that four parts of the world have strained to satisfy the demand. But the epoch of the great children—the superb realisation of parenthood—shall come to those alone who realise that the human body of itself is intolerable. This realisation is not for the coolness of age, when the body has lost its red beaming. It must come in the high tides of flesh-power—this vision to perceive that the physical vesture is but the purple background of a star.

Women enter the very austerities of progress, whispering, "Especially, do I belong here."

A workman's dream-girl is made over and over again. Many have found mine too much of spirit, and too little a tea-pourer. Many have said to me—"Women want worldly things, just as men do—perhaps more." Life has not shown me this; all the life afield did not show me the courage which a myriad mothers use daily, nor the selflessness.

The listening girl in the novel that precedes this book, is nearer the being I mean, than I have been able to do before. It may be that every one in whom I have seen that white bloom, in word or glance, gave me something for her.

It is the *loss of the love of self*—that thrills me most in the world—that glows everywhere and animates the race, and which it has been my experience to find more often in women.

Penelope could not have shown me the selflessness which I mean, had it not been for the suffering years. The roadside cup of the white phlox lady was her gift from the hardness of the world. It is through suffering that we lose the love of self. We call it suffering, but there is a consciousness that comes from it that is priceless. We cannot become sensitive without suffering; and we cannot divine the truth unless we are sensitive. One has to reach an almost self-effacement to associate with fine ideas. There is always a murky place in the philosophy of a man

who has not mastered himself. The way of this mastery is through suffering.

Many women are natural mystics. They understand the safety of service; that the outpouring heart is replenished with purity; that it is the in-breathing of self-service which catches the contagion. We imprison women here in the man-idea of things. They love blindly; they want to accept. I sometimes think they accept so well, because they have a clearer sense than we, that there is an eternity in which to come into one's own. We, as men, are handicapped, because we are taught by the world to believe that the first and most effective way of reaching a woman's understanding—is to show her our passion for her body. . . . There has never been a turning in my life, that the nearest women did not understand and welcome the new dimension, as if they had been waiting for it all the time.

Yet the soul of woman dies if it may not sometime aspire. A periodic possession of devils on a man's part will not break the waiting quiescence of his woman, but the sordid routine of downtown methods will set her into screaming destruction at the last.

A woman can wait—she is happy to wait; but there comes a time when the man must turn back to her; when he must find in her all that he saw at first, and the spiritual lustre of the years upon

her. Just a glimpse of that in a man's eyes, and all the rest is forgotten.

Life does not flow to one sustained tempo. There are rousing allegros of battle, but there are also thrilling adagios of soul-yearning. There are moments of life so deep in significance that anything which might happen to the body is trivial. The rest is unreality.

It came about that I permitted the listening girl in the recent novel to suffer very deeply, as the world goes. Many have not liked that, but it seemed high conquest—less for what she gave her hero, than for what she received. A voice answered her sacrifice. It was the same with the war-pictures. I could not have written all that fighting again, except as a setting to show the treachery and tragedy of the world with its blinding, crucifying ways—a setting for the Ploughman to emerge, a voice. . . . She found him after the battles, perceived that he must have silence. There is drama in silence, in standing alone, in learning to love men, though it is not yet epical enough for the many. . . . There is always silence before a resurrection. Often there is a woman by the tomb of the body—but another, or others, to kneel before the lustre of the risen man.

I do not think there was ever enacted the drama of a man's resurrection to higher life, that there were not among the women at hand, one or more to acclaim the spiritual consciousness. Even the

woman at the cistern could forget the flesh; and Beatrice, passing on, knew that the dream of her was a lovelier uplift than her arms and lips.

I see on the page a little back . . . "and always a woman to kneel before the lustre of the risen man."

You may ask, "Why kneel?"

I answer, "As a sculptor kneels in the finishing of a task."

Is she bereft? Not unless a workman who has finished an immortal task is bereft.

Only the woman who weeps by the tomb of the body is bereft. If her consciousness were not in the flesh, she would have heard the angel saying, "He is not here. He is risen."

Out on the highway John and Peter are running to meet Him. And the Woman who gave Him to the world, the others who held Him in the world by their love and faith—"Mary, Magdalene and Johanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and other women"—they, too, are out on the highway *explaining* the splendour of it all to the apostles.

29

SUMMER

WAR and women and work—such as I am, they have made me. . . . The latest year was perfect in its way as the Field-house summer; in fact, I was happier in exterior things, for the peace of the world was more nearly established. The recent novel was finished, and throughout, even in title, reveals the effort to be plain, plain, plain; to say things in the speech of men, without the sacrifice of any dimension. Still it is only the big rock-facing of that ideal; some of the stones are set, but the pointing is not done.

I want to put body and mind and spirit—into a book, as into a being. If there is vagueness, it is still bad work. I want to show that work and religion are the same; that a man who has found his work, receives his idea of God in it, and expresses the mystery best through it. The steps of growth which make for the excellence of one, are identical with the other. Man, raptly at the work he loves, is at his highest best, his replen-

ishment from the energy that drives the suns, the very processes of his physical deterioration suspended.

A man must find his own individuality, before his inseparable relation to his race is revealed. In the intense years of perfecting workmanship, he struggles to bring to himself the rewards of toil; nearing mastery, he seeks to bestow his gifts to the race. In his work, the individual draws his first sense of the high passion to create. A man is changed for all time when this passion comes. It is designed for all men, but few of our generation have yet attained. It has proven far too abstract and ungripable for the many. Nature, not to be beaten, tempts the multitude with honey-drops to awaken desire and instinct; yet if all men were urged by the passion to create, children would be the aim, not the incident of marriage; marriage would lose its smudges of to-day; and eugenics would cease to imply calisthenics and blood-tests, but would be a working force in the world, moving from the ethical outward, and not from the physical in. To the physically-minded, all is body.

Few workers, even in the so-called fine arts, throb with the passion to create; or there would not be this leaping of whole schools at each fresh idea from an original producer. There would be no imitation. The passion to create is at peace only when the self is being expressed. To-day,

every idea is repeated and repeated, until at last it becomes even too common for the lips of men; and machines are made to multiply it. What a change in the massive array of the uninspired—if suddenly surged over them, the passion to create.

It is a long way to poise and peace; the fret of the world is slow to cease against the heart. The rise of the workman (like the man in a vision who stood upon a pinnacle of skulls, and was told they were his own of former lives) is upon the necks of his illusions. Vocation is highly important to this peace; but still more important is the vision of the mother to direct it. If the mother has given the child her vision and faith, her spiritual sustaining, he shall vanquish the indwelling world before the end; he shall know the quiescence of self, and of fear and desire. His life shall breathe sweetly upon his time before he goes, though he has made on the way every mistake as a workman and a man.

I came up wanting the world, aflame with the burning of ambition. I shudder at the force created during the years of struggle toward competitive supremacy. There was a time when my extinction as an artist would have seemed more hideous and horrible than many details in the body.

There is a poise in which man acquainted with grief, stands alone, serves men, loves his race,—the forces of his life sweetened, not turned from

their task. This is not hardness nor austerity. It is a kind of master-tenderness that overcomes fear. It is realisation that the death of the body is not the end of man's relation to his loves.

They call him a mystic—who hates the things that are seen about us. One name is as good as another; but it appears to me that he is a realist whose thoughts have turned from self, to the oneness of all; from the temporal to the things that endure. I would sing always—the workman whose gaze is fixed ahead, who fights the things that are—the world-man and his mother. . . . He dreams of the source of the Nile, the new continent; he spends his life planting apple seeds ahead of the pioneers; he builds a boat of pasture-oak and sails around the world, talking to God in solitude and storm; he senses the new power in the world, perceives the new star. He is the heaven-maker—for matter and flesh must follow and fit into his dream. Every form of life was first a thought. Action and matter follow the specifications of the thought, as water follows the curve of a basin. Every great servant of the world first has the thought or the vision. He holds to that with such passion, that all suffering, even the Cross, is easy.

There is a task for every man who has learned to listen; a task, or a dream, or an ideal. Our life to-day is but an answer to the dreams of past men. They gave their labour to the world; they

gave themselves to men. And these are the terms of spiritual motherhood, for women are closer to the visions and vitalities than we are. According to the largeness and the beauty of the dream, is the child. . . . They could not be born again —those dynamos of greed and desire in the underworld—if men and women in the flesh did not give themselves to corresponding beastliness. They would wear out beneath the flesh. Nature would cleanse them quite away.

. . . In one of the spring nights, I rode back from the postoffice to the little cottage by the lake. My horse walked down the long lane into the south and toward the shore. It was moonless and a night of stars, the air clear and still. Orion was sinking low into the west. Vega was a blue-white flame in the northeast; the demon, Algol, a-gleam in the northwest; in the southwest the dog-star blazed, and nearly opposite in the lower east, completing a great square, Spika softly shone—Spika of the Virgin.

It was all so orderly. Toward meridian, in tender majesty, arose Arcturus, the dearest of the distant suns to earth-men; and faintly I saw the universal beaming of the galaxy. . . . Stars and bees had always called and thrilled me. I remember the bleak lie that came from high school, when I asked to study the stars. "It is almost pure mathematics," was said.

It isn't, but the study of God.

In the first place, it is looking upward. You have heard Carlyle crying out in rage because no one had taught him the constellations as a child. Of the fourteen young men of the Upper Room whom I led out in the winter night, not one knew Taurus from Orion, nor Rigel from Betelguese. There is no blame to them, but to the brutal abstraction, World—so caught in common things, so back-handed in bringing up the child. A hive of bees and the night skies—all that one can learn from child to prophet is in them.

It was all so orderly; and yet those suns of space are but the great gods of matter, with planetary children all about them, dark for our eyes; with rebellious cometary forces seething in and out, destroying themselves, because they come not to abide in rhythm. And many of those distant planets, already cooled to support life, are large as our sun. . . . I rode slowly. I thought of the æons of development on such a planet, whose age compared to our earth is like Father Time to the new child, where all boyish things are put away.

I thought of the glories for men to rise in—of the planets swinging their solemn courses through the Swan binary, for instance—an orange sun rising upon a world-system, as a blue orb sets; or of the majesty of life on a planet between

the red and ancient Antares and its green sun-mate.

Yet, with every thought, there was a return to earth, for this is the garden of our souls. There is Jupiter to show what earth has been, its surface a molten crust covered in thousands of miles of cloud and steam, its oceans still in air; and the moon, to show what earth shall be—scarcely turning, hung in airless cold, its contraction finished, a corpse slowly carried forth to the covering of the interstellar night.

But earth is yet young. I thought of her savage youth again—half-fused, the waters which were under the firmament, as yet undivided from the waters which were above the firmament; dim days of changeless season from pole to equator; and at last, the first burst of sunlight, after the coolness and condensation of the clouds into oceans and rivers. There was light. And what a scene—those first abortive forms of life in that burst of sunlight. That was the first touch of order and beauty upon chaos.

That was Mother Earth's turning to her God, her emerging from the darkness of self-consciousness, to the radiance of her Source again. That was the impregnation of beauty and order. Her forces at last were contained and at rest. Yet, she is far even now from the apex of her bearing. Her rocks must yet break forth into singing, as her metals already answer at the touch of this

strange new power, which makes order and straight-line-running in the crude atomic chaos of steel.

Electricity was not always a planetary resource. Potentially it existed, as there is potential self-consciousness in the rabbit, and potential divinity in the self-man. Mother Earth undergoing a continually heightened vibration had to reach a certain pitch of receptivity, before there could be electrical manifestation. This force shall become as common as muscular energy. Other more brilliant subtle and potent energies shall appear and adjust themselves to the spiritual will of man.

. . . Suddenly I thought of it all—as a plan for the procreation of Sons of God. As clearly the process appeared to me, as the figures on the dial of a watch:

Twelve, the superb, the perfect, at the top. Call it God, if you will, or Divine Consciousness, or the Absolute, or the Beginning.

Then to the sixth hour, the gestation of life-bearing worlds; and the coming at last of one among many, known as Earth, to her period of returning to the sun—her *Thy Will Be Done*—her dawn of planetary order and beauty. The sixth hour might be called: A lichen upon a rock.

The seventh hour: A lizard.

The eighth hour: The lifting spines.

The ninth hour: The animal-man.

The tenth hour: The self-man—here we are caught—but ahead on the road:

The eleventh hour: The world-man.

The twelfth hour: The God-men—the Sons—conscious, creative, spiritual forces—differing from one another, as the young oak trees differ from one another and from their sire, the splendid centre of the forest; each prepared to establish his centre and bring forth his kind.

. . . My eyes were held a moment by the half-divine gleaming of Arcturus—a light already ancient,—light that travels seven times, the second, around our equator, requiring two centuries to reach our eyes. . . . And there was a light at the window before me. My horse had stopped to feed upon the tender grass. Within the window were three fair young heads, all bent over this very typewriter, forming letters in approved way; and they were very fair under the single lamp. I was full of respect for them. My mother passed by in the shadow; I heard Penelope singing—and the whole scheme was so vast and so orderly and so beautiful, that I knelt upon the grass in happiness at my horse's head.

My story is done. If I did not think there was a Voice from it all, be very sure it would not be told. Sometimes I am tired; sometimes fresh and strong, even content that the fighting is not all finished. The fact is, perfect peace is for

another time and place; those are stolen hours here in which we play; the real lift of it all is in a man's work. All is well. It is only our bodies that tire.

The pages that follow are not part of my story. They form part of the Abstraction from it all, as it comes to me at this half-way place. I would be glad to have you read it, because I think it is the best part:

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THE WORLD MAN AND HIS MOTHER

A GLANCE first at the darker side of the shield: The modern world is heavy and overpowering. Man lives in terror of running out of something. He gathers together great gilded things, lest he fail to have bread; he attaches his mark of possession to women, lest his desire catch him empty-handed. He has not mastered desire, but has become a prey to it.

Modern manhood falters and fails before cheap predicaments of matter and sense. It is almost incredible that the many have not grasped this self-evident truth: One cannot maim the weak nor lead the blind astray without suffering an abatement of his own native force. The spirit of man must conquer enemies infinitely more subtle than gluttony for physical possessions. The larger human consciousness is not reached until man has conquered intellectual arrogance, the disintegrating force of worshipping inferiors, the

devilish magnetisms of artistic mastery, and finally that black enthralling passion for spiritual dominion. The self-conscious world of to-day has not even begun to cope with the big devils waiting to test the human spirit. At least, in this late hour, we should be facing worthier foes. As a race we should long since have been delivered from petty illusions. If the many prove to love best the black road (for choice is a prerogative of self-consciousness) they should be men in their lawlessness. It is shameful indeed to be discovered in this year of our Lord—enmeshed in the low boyish disorders of greed and sensuality. The child and the imbecile are ashamed when caught in the thrall of these things.

Commerce has taken the place of war, as the enemy to national life. The old decent ideal is gone from trade. Selling-cost and the package have devoured the value of the article. The downtown lie infests our evenings. Lies of trade have become lies of manners. Advertising has robbed us of the sense of words. Telephone and printing press, caught from the very apex of material ingenuity, have fallen to be the mighty multipliers of the lie.

Even the big devils of the world have risen above the greed for materials to the greed for power, and have long since put away the cheapest of dissipations which ruin the body. A devil knows best the value of the body. A man born

ill may become a saint; but a man cannot pander to his senses and preserve his decency. No spiritual illumination falls to him who holds an arrogant appetite; and that which many a man sees in woman and in food and drink and money is very often the form of an animal, fat from devouring his own soul.

We are in momentary danger of death. Must we have a more obvious sentence of death upon us? To adjust our memoirs and expand our souls, must we, like Madame Roland, live in the shadow of a guillotine? . . . You are sentenced to death in five minutes, in five or fifty years. Why banish the thought in laughter and the clatter of tools? There is glory about it. Visioning that glory you will not spend your days and nights in a frenzy to buy cheap and sell dear. The way is the way of compassion—the turning of the currents of one's life outward, instead of in. This is loving one's neighbour.

I do not write as a religionist. The way of compassion is the way of world-work and manhood. We are so constructed as men, that our souls cannot breathe, when all the currents and energies of the life are turned inward. It is good to love one's neighbour, for love is service; love is giving. As the soul outpours in service—and this is the secret—its inbreath, its replenishment, is of the vitality that makes immortal health. The spiritual body of man is formed of

this replenishment, integrated from it. This spiritual body does not die.

The whole evolution from a bent spine is a learning how to love. The animal man loved himself, and through desire first, a sex-opposite; the self-man saw his image in his children and learned to love them for it. In the expansions of humanity we have learned to love our friends. The world-man hurls out his splendid offering to the race. The God-man is universal, a cosmic creative force.

With this compassion, one sustains the weak, worships the true, throbs exquisitely in the planetary tides of anguish and happiness. With this culture, one thinks with one's soul, without which process a man cannot become an individual. The soul does not analyse, it realises. This outpouring with its immortal replenishment is the true chivalry. The living of such Compassionates is a continual radiation that uplifts and ignites other men. It knows no fear; it triumphs over death; the death of the flesh of such men is an exaltation. The integrated eternal spirits of such men are the first fruits of Mother Earth, the purpose and vindication of earth-life—the enduring yield.

Matter is dead. The touch of quickening spirit upon matter awakened the first lichen upon the rock; the touch of quickening spirit upon

chaos shook forth the first form. Life itself is the union of matter and spirit; you turn on the force and the machine moves. Spirit is the power; matter the instrument. According to the fineness of the matter is its receptivity to spiritual force. The human brain is the finest product of sunlight; it is matter in its finest state. The most sensitive brain attracts the most powerful spiritual energy.

The death of the body is the separation of spirit from matter. If the spirit has not been integrated more powerfully; if it has not approached more nearly to conscious creative force, through its long or short sojourn in flesh—the life has been wasted.

If the whole life has been given to material things, the consciousness, after the separation of flesh and spirit, will be identified with the corruption. If the life has been one of spiritual aspiration, the consciousness, after the separation of flesh and spirit, will be identified with immortality. The scabbard falls; the flashing blade is raised. This is the triumph over death, the swallowing of death in victory.

Man's attitude to death in the midst of the life of the body is a certain indication of the spiritual force which animates him.

Man's illumination in the flesh is the transfer of his consciousness from the body to the soul. In making this transfer an eternal identity is fixed. "The guest has arrived." This transfer

takes place when the receptivity of the mind has reached a certain fineness. The body and brain must first be mastered; the life currents must turn *outward* in service to men before this mastery is established, and before the superb spiritual replenishment can be received. The high graciousness of the plan is that we are none alike. It is best through finding our own especial task that the self can be subdued.

Behind task, behind mind, behind our intrinsic spiritual endowment, is a man's mothering.

Two boys team along through their school-days together, and emerge into the world. Five years later, the triumphs of one are still identified with school and college. He is revolving in an orbit, the extreme boundary of which was reached in the be-ribboned presentation of degree. His companion has forgotten, and been born again in the larger dimension of world-learning. Some latent urge is making an individual of the second; and the lack of it has left the first a mere unit of the herd.

Two writers evolve through the early struggles with an equal dribble of success. Their eyes are concentrated upon the moving matter of their age. This is their giant task-master. They produce zealously in this raw body of things, and it answers at last. Five years later, one has begun to put away these boyish effects; his work has risen from matter to mind, and a softening, visioning

spirit is upon him, strangely igniting his intellectual forces. He will say to you raptly that his real work is just beginning. The other is still multiplying his horses, guns, dollar-signs and tinted sounding shells of femininity.

The difference was there before they were born. It lies in their intrinsic gift of spiritual vitality. A billion elements go into the making of a boy, but there is one fundamental agent of his greatness or commonness, one immediate source of his freshness and endurance in the world; one, more than any other, who determines the quality of his receptive surface, and the capacity of the feed-wire which connects it with the spiritual driving force of his race. This agent is his mother. She is not only the crucible; she is the culminating component of his life. She is the intimate, the marvellous source. It is the spirit which a woman gives her child before birth, which sustains and rebears him to the larger fields of manhood and service. It is more wonderful than health or brain or any beauty. The mother can surmount the past and its myriad compounds. This is eugenics; this is spiritual creativeness.

There is a mothering of the body, and a mothering of the soul; there is an automatic bestowal of what we have at hand upon a child, and there is a conscious intensive cultivation of the human spirit. This is the highest art of human service. This is the motherhood of the future, of

world-men, not of self-men. All the devils of hell cannot spoil the fruits of such maternities.

Man's illumination—the transfer of his consciousness from the flesh to the spiritual body—is the one perfect answer to his mother's soul-gift.

You can see it in any child, the down-pull and the up-lift; the audacity of days and the distress of nights; the impulse to evil, and the working alone of a corrective tendency. The motherhood of the body supplies the instrument of expression which in due season can resist no longer the gravitation of the earth; the mothering of the soul supplies the spiritual expression itself, and this answers to the levitation which defies death.

This is the age of woman's transition. Change is invariably accompanied by restlessness and pain. Man does not know to-day the thoughts that live in his own house. Mostly he would not understand if he were told. The restlessness of women everywhere is the result of the breaking-up of the old lies of man's world. The cry of women for equality is but one of the revelations of transition. There is a greater sex-revolt. For the first time in the world, the left hand is raised against the right. There is a revolt against children as a by-product of marriage, a revolt against the vulgar nature of marriage itself; finally there is the ghostly grey path of sterility running from the east to the west.

The higher the moral and intellectual evolution of a people, the more essential become space, leisure, and soul-expression for bringing children into the world. When a certain people have become individuals, and the elements of greatness are formative within them, they pay the price for reversion to worldliness in the extinction of name. The race that produced our few great workmen, that founded our culture and gave us a name in English, is following the red Indian *westward* off the face of the earth.

One of the enthralling mysteries of life is that children will not come to highly evolved men and women who have turned back upon their spiritual obligation and clouded the vision which was their birthright.

Women divine these things, if they do not utter them. The restlessness of women arises from them; for restlessness and moral illness are ever the results when one's work is not being done. A renewal of the ancient and authoritative ideal must come, and at once. Either the women themselves will distract men from their concentration upon brute matter, or out of conflicts, and the thrilling vision of their causes, prophets will be born.

The elder Scripture is remembered by this thought, and the innumerable times when the Hebraic Jehovah called the children of Israel to halt in their evils, through acts, covenants and

visions of women, as witness Hannah, Deborah, Rachel and Ruth. Such may be the transforming component of the spiritual experiment, America. The salient inner force which women hold may be brought to bear—may become the balance of power. From somewhere, vision must be brought to the man-ordered materiality of the present time; mind must be added to brain; intuition to logic; divination to reason.

Man's tendency in the ordering of an art, a business, a romance, a house or a nation, is to rush to the physical and exterior well-being of his task. Woman's mission in the world, however the many may be jarred by instances to the contrary, is to foster and augment the spiritual life of the race. She is the artist and the sculptor of the race. The great men we need so bitterly must be animate with her dreams—as have been the great men of days less evil than these. But women, so fluent to adapt to strange conditions, must not fall in man's ways, must not falter in the attraction and novelty of the affairs so noisy and uppermost now. Women must be very sure that it is their spiritual aliment for which the nation suffers. From all save women who are great enough to be unlike the men of to-day—oh, Lord, deliver us.

We want from women first of all that which is plain and true. Great motherhood with all its mystic glowing is based upon the first princi-

ples of integrity. This is the ancient hill-rock upon which the arts were first graven, and to which the images came—fortitude, purity, hope, vision. How these would sing in our dry and hardening national arteries. How pitifully does the sick man, America, need great mothering now.

There is hope that the spiritual flower of the generation to follow us will be superb, but there is no hope of it being large. Never on earth was a planting less substantially stemmed, rooted so weakly; and never was its seasonal and specific parasites in such number and state of devouring. The younger generation has all the breadth of tolerance for evil that is a gift of the gods—but it lacks the vision, and the cleaving to the good, without which tolerance is a curse. The torrent of brutalities so balmily condoned by our intensely modern set, has swept away the stamina and personal purity which makes tolerance God-like.

The excellent mystery between the sexes which has been the drive of art, which has broadened the brows of children, kept burning the fires of romance and idealism; that additional sacredness of spirit added to flesh, which has lifted the human sex-relation out of the scope of all other fertilisations—one writes it with awe and bitterness—has passed away before the soulless *straight-seeing* of the younger generation.

Before God, it was not an illusion—this that

has vanished. It was the pearl of great price. It was the cement and evil-proofing of our spiritual evolution. Love is lost without it—the mating of humans is but a commerce. Without it there is no restlessness for great service, nor great utterance; Compassion, the art of the future, sickens in its inception; without it there are no "white presences among the hills."

The young men just behind us who have taken what we have, and must show us before we go, the way of to-morrow—this younger male generation—look at the wasting face of it, under its favourite downtown lamps. You have seen the low sharp stamp of trade, the animalism that is rhythmic; you have heard the facile falsity of its speech, the sleet of its laughter. Speak to this composite of Vision, of Compassion, of Heaven, of the Future—and you are an alien. It does not know your language, scorns it and you. There are nuns in the world because of it; the loveliest of the potential mothers are childless in their brief hour because it is so.

And many of the young women who mate in these conditions, for the most part, bring to their motherhood all the worldly sophistication of the most-knowing fathers of the preceding generation. Given a spiritual discernment to balance, only largeness of calibre could come from this, but the child whose heritage is spiritual nonentity and glib worldliness is pitifully deprived of anchor-

age in the swift betraying tides of to-day. The spectacle of the world has not made this modern mother recoil. In despising ancient prudishness, she has met revelations which every evolving human must face—but without restoring her soul against them, without shriving herself among the clean hills. Immortals are not born of such people.

The man risen to a master-workman is no longer a stranger to the minds of women. According to the value of his work, is he a guest of the immediate few or of the expansive many. Every high-born child partakes of the qualities of these heroic guests. This is an instinct toward race-perfection, one of the forces of humanity's drive forward.

Nothing ever compared in racial importance to the promise of a messiah which became a conviction in the breast of every Jewish woman. Prophets, judges and soldiers were the incidents of that great dream's maturing. Prophecies more and more identified the messiah, because the messianic ideal was the spiritual property bestowed by the mothers of men. Again and again this ideal kept the race from sinking. Jesus was the culmination.

There is no law to prevent avatars being born into the world, other than the lack of vessels fine and pure enough, through which they may

appear. The real divines are first of all eager to return for service. Compassion for men is the very pith of their spiritual integration. Reaching a certain glory beyond their race—the answer is a turning back to lift the race to that glory. They see as we cannot, the oneness of all life, for that is the central sun in the heavens, for the eyes of the *illuminati*. The spiritual progress of the world-men is delayed by our failures. As we used to say in the cavalry—"as fast as the slowest horse,"—that determined the pace of the charge.

There is no law to prevent avatars being born into the world, other than the lack of vessels fine and pure enough. . . . Look at the contour of a stretch of woodland against the sky. Two or three trees stand a little above the rest. You do not see one of upper Oregon's mammoth firs, nor a California red-wood, whose trunk would still be naked a half-hundred feet above the top-foliage of this woodland. There must be the soil. It is difficult to imagine an isolated monarch of the western sea mists in the midst of oaks and elms and maples, which do not furnish the height, nor the densities of shade to challenge such lofty up-rearing strength.

The avatar must grow up in the midst of his time, a child and boy and man; his brain and body trained by the prevailing tendencies and instincts of his race. The intrinsic drive of his spiritual gift must surmount them all, must turn

against them all, but he is marked and wearied and weakened on the way. It is far less miraculous for such a being to appear and flourish, in the midst of a racial ideal; in truth a great human spirit is the inevitable answer to a racial ideal, but his way is prepared by prophets and mighty men, who herald a master, because they are the earlier fruits of the very ideal which must produce him.

The preparers are upon us now. The transition tells that; the tearing down tells that. After the wrecking shall arise the forces of construction —the restorers of the dream to the motherhood of the race—and finally *one* above all. An avatar is but an integrated ideal—a creative spiritual force, returning to flesh to impregnate his race with his ideal.

The idea of beauty of the average man is sensuous. He has inflicted this idea upon his man's world—upon his sons and daughters and mates—during all the dark centuries in which the making of men has been in his power, instead of woman's. Spiritual beauty is austere and foreign to the average man because of this sensuous consciousness.

Multitudes of women go about their life today, using but their lowlier faculties—speaking, answering, working, their deeper life unspoken, unanswered, unused. Multitudes of women have their children, before they know what they lack,

before they perceive the low estate of their usage in a man's world. Multitudes of women, out of the restlessness and agony of middle life, in which the realisation comes that their real natures have not been called forth, perceive about them the children of their bodies, but strangers to the awakening mother souls. . . . And who is this man of the world who comes home at night—this stranger whom one calls Husband?

There are multitudes of women who have no children, who have been able to find or accept no man which the world has shown them; multitudes, whose spirits awaken through the very agony of empty arms.

When one considers the shames, the dreads, the offensiveness, which have preyed upon matters of sex from the beginnings of self-consciousness, the wonder is not that we are spiritually flaccid and myopic; rather that any are preparing to enter the clearer country of world-manhood. Yet the few are already emerging. The depth and blackness of the tragedy of women has already challenged the forerunners of a giant among the spiritual champions. A new dream must be brought to motherhood; the defiling sense of sin must be eradicated from the loves of women, and their pitiful expectancy of brutal tokens from men. Women must be inspired to express their best. Their lives in this man's world of to-day permits them to express only their coarsest and lowest.

The grown man who can accept the gift of a woman, bestowed with love upon him—without undergoing a succession of crashes in his own understanding, vague upheavals at least, is a kind of destroyer that the community is well rid of.

There is not a single incident in the human love episode, from the moment the girl baby first plays at mothering, until the time when she takes into her arms, the child of her youngest child—that she is not by nature the ruling spirit. She is overwhelmingly designed for the initiative in all that pertains to earth's replenishing.

. . . The words from the lips of a woman in the ecstasy of love are mystical, vibrant from the very source of things. She does not remember them; they escape art; they should lift a man to spiritual chivalry. . . . There is something in a woman's yielding that holds the ultimate secret. The man who is not hushed in the presence of it, is not sensitive to divine presence. In this first great giving of woman—the past is obliterated. There is no background to this high divining moment. The flame that woman glows with, in such an hour, is from the future. She is a love-instrument played upon by creative light. . . . The essence of the glory of these high hours of women is their spontaneity. Man should be the slave of them. . . . *There comes an hour*—that is the sweetest mystery in Nature.

Man is very crude indeed not to know that in

the more perfect bestowals of women, he is but the symbol of an archangel—the symbol of something to be—which calls forth this great giving from her. He is not as she saw him an hour ago, nor as she will see him again. He is lost in the brightenings of her vision; the flame from the future envelopes him; the forces are about her which surmount flesh and conquer heredity.

There comes an hour—like all the mysteries of Nature, of which it is the highest,—like the flight of the bee queens, the lifting of wings through all the woodland festivals, like the turning of comets back to the sun.

What has man to do in the managing of this supreme transaction? Why should he be arbiter in this cosmic affair? What business has he to make her stop to think, because of his property-mindedness, if she has married him or not; why should he be allowed to dedicate June, when the miracle is done in May? By what right does he hold the future of the race, like papers in a vault, —man, who chooses his woman by her face and figure, collects her by a process of deal-making, cinches the bargain through a priest of his own development, and appraises her motherhood ecstasy in terms of the five senses?

Do not mistake—as men, we are sons of women, who are daughters of men. *One* as a race, we are; one in the relation to the future; as one, we must suffer for the lost ideal; as one we

must suffer because the mother has lost her dream. . . . It was to our importuning that she succumbed; it was our greed for her body, that took from her the love-initiative, and crushed the mystic beauty out of her ideal. We are not rich as men; we are half-men, because of our desire. Yet we shall share the splendour of the restoration days.

And this is man's work: The creature who eight times the year, obeys the tradesmen's instinct for style; who has broken her bearing with centuries of clothes-bondage, fed her brain upon man's ideas of sex, her body upon food bought for her and prepared by people whom she does not respect; who has not yet heard the end of a dollar-discussion begun when her baby ears first noted sounds; who holds in shame all that is mighty of her genius, and who has finally accepted as a mate, one of her male familiars—she is a man-made creature, in whom is buried a woman. She is man's ignorance and effrontery incarnate—the victim of his mania for material proprieties, which from the beginning have utterly desecrated spiritual truth.

But again, we are deep in the pangs of a transition which shall bring better days. There is that in woman, though latent so long, though missing for generations, which the lies of a man's world have proved unable to destroy. This ideal is immortal or it would have been stamped out. The

native beauty of this ideal is shown in the tendency which inspires women to turn with strange ardor to the world's master workmen. This is her innate selectiveness again; a sorry bit of vitality left from that absorbing instinct of the old time (which is but a foreshadow of the new), when every mother in Israel believed that she had a chance to bring forth the messiah.

The master of this transition shall restore the ideal to woman, and to her daughter. From some woman's soul-gift he shall come; out of her sorrow and agony, he shall rise. He shall not give women children of his, but his spirit shall restore the dream. Through the cloud-rack and the city-murk his vision shall erect the constellations. . . . *Those women who listen but for a moment—will not bear the children that would have come to them, if they had not listened.*

The stuff of herds comes into being through the motherhood of the body; only where there is vision, may enter the individual. Only where light is integrated, can great light be endured; for the shock of illumination would break down the tissues of a man, not already bathed in spiritual fire.

Motherhood first of all, (the intrinsic gift of spiritual vitality, which a woman bestows with faith and dreams upon her yet unformed child), brings about the answering vision from the grown man thirty years afterward; turns him from a

self-server to a server of men. It is the mother's soul-gift which makes the individual. The individual saves himself from the world, because he finds his Task. Herds are made of those who have failed to find their tasks. First the mother, then the vocation, then the world-man—and with every world-man born, a great task shall be done, and the race shall find itself presently incapable of being and living as before.

Motherhood, vocation, illumination—that white, irresistible flood of the spirit, the very vitality of God, breaking through the consciousness of men, inspiring the utterance, making incandescent the vials of mirth and tenderness, cohering the separate realisations with the inevitable spiritual line; hurling its light into crypts where the treasures of the past eternity of experience are stored; driving its fire ahead as far into the eternity of the future, signalising the man, a prophet, and the woman a mother of the world.

There is a teaching for those children already with us: that the mighty glories of humanity must come to earth through them; that angels are near, when one turns the current of the inner life outward; that the great strength of heroes is of their giving-forth—their outpouring of love; that the reason for being is to pour forth our service and compassion; that we are sick and forgotten when we do not breathe forth our best. Children have a strange understanding of these things—

as if they were closer to the source of them. Little girls seem sometimes half-divine in their understanding—when told that God will send His angels to them for their children, and not little tainted animal babies—if they show themselves pure enough in their outpouring of love. There is no other ideal of comparable importance in education.

This is eugenics—in spite of the physical thraldom which identifies and blasphemes the word to-day.

The growth of the human spirit is from simplicity to complication, and back to simplicity again, each circle in a nobler dimension of progress. There is the simplicity of the peasant and the simplicity of the seer. Between these two lie all the confusion and alarm of life; a passage of disorder well-designated Self-consciousness.

Here are the rapids, the calling rocks, false lights, the dragons and all ferocity; here are fear, greed, desire, the sirens and all sensuousness. Every lasting epic has pictured the passage in part before Ulysses and since Peer Gynt. Every returning knight has portrayed his particular devils. The journey or voyage is the one story in the world, the one drama, the one allegory.

Conscious of himself, man goes forth on his own will. For the time, the divine will is abrogated, and this constitutes the only hell there is.

The orders of life beneath man, played upon by natural forces, render back no answering individual expression. Man, self-conscious, realises not only himself, but his neighbour. Sordid and infinite complications arise. Not only does he sense his own desires and appetites, but perceives his neighbour's—how his neighbour satisfies them. That envy and competition should result, is as inevitable as humidity when the rain clouds are close in hot weather; as inevitable as the product of greed out of desire, and cruelty out of fear. Moreover, to a man, self-conscious, it appears as obviously as light and darkness, that there are matters to tell and matters to withhold. Concealment and perversion of fact are the fruits of this particular planting. From lying and deceiving his neighbour, the illusion thickens until a man lies and deceives himself, and he is adrift in the dragon seas, indeed. It would appear, misery and tribulation thus upon him, that man would realise his own will accomplished this; that his own will, and none other, had betrayed him. Yet all human history is held in the interval of man's failure to perceive this plain law of cause and effect. All enduring human achievement, in tone and stone and word and pigment, repeats the tragedy of the self-conscious will, and the final *Thy will be done* of certain belated valiants, yet only the brotherhood dreamers perceive it to-day.

Man must master himself to listen to the higher law; that is the difficulty. The man who enters a cage of wild beasts, knows well that if he masters himself he is safe. In a self-conscious life, properly spent, man masters himself. He is not eligible to enter the spiritual elect, until this is accomplished. Dante's descent into hell pictures the multitudes enchanted for millenniums in their especial illusions. One lesson, but one, from it all: if you do not master your devil in self-conscious life, you will feel his mastery afterward.

There is an eternal splendour in the plan that the self-man must master himself to become the world-man. Self-consciousness with all its torture and travail of experience, is the only known portage from that inland lake, which is the simplicity of the peasant, to the oceanic simplicity of the seer.

In his very nature, the world-man can only come into being of his own volition. You force and direct the will of your child, but wisely withdraw and await his call for help, if ever his manhood is to be secured. So the divine will withdraws itself, and man makes his world for a season. We look around at the sorry job of it, but we must not be lost in its apparitions. Since the only evil in the world is the misuse of self-consciousness, and since self-consciousness is the only passage to emancipation, a new clarity comes to the frequent reiteration of philosophers that there

is no sin. Accepting this, one must declare also that there is no good.

Recall the parable of the Sower. Evil cannot be denied, since all the seeds scattered in the garden of earth *do not* bring forth their spiritual fruit. Stony ground, indeed, is this self-consciousness, and many fall therein. There is a destructive element at work in life, a push for every pull, or the planets would not spin. There is a left hand that withholds, for the right that impels; a gravitation that demands death for the levitation that uplifts to world vision. Sin is as good a name as another for this destroying force, and it is foolish to affirm its non-existence.

Without evil there could be no development, nor any sense of good. Since man apprehends good with the beginnings of his spiritual consciousness, there would be no such consciousness without evil. Without knowledge of good and evil, there could be no conscious creative force. In self-consciousness, man learns good and evil. The beginnings of spiritual consciousness appear from choosing the good and discarding the evil. Spiritual consciousness, its flowering and fruitage, is the only worthy answer of Mother Earth for her spiritual impregnation, and for the æons of quickening solar energy played upon her.

God is the spiritual source of life. The finer the human consciousness, the less will God be humanised in conception; the more atrocious ap-

pears the tendency to confine him to man-made forms. You must be a god to conceive God. That which drives the world is the vitality of God—a divine emanation. Thus God is in the starry night, in the wash of the waves; in the corn and olives and grapes, in the cattle and the wheat. The more potent the divine force in any creature, the greater its glory. More finely and powerfully integrated than elsewhere, this divine force is integrated in the soul of man.

As the heart of man is the organ of the blood, the soul of man is the organ of the spirit. Its systole and disastole is service on the one hand, and inspiration on the other. The heart belongs to the temporary instrument; and the soul, in its developed state is an exchange, or sub-station, of the great central spiritual energy which is, by every indication, everlasting. The value of each sub-station is its individuality. It receives the same power in its inspiration; but gives forth service of its own kind. . . . As the dry seed contains the embryonic plant and its first nutriment, so the flesh of man is the nourishing matrix of his soul. The plan is the same; the scale larger and more beautiful.

By every observation, law and analogy in life, the constructive purpose at work in the world, is toward the end of the increase of spiritual receptivity in every creature, a continually heightening vibration toward the key-rhythm. There is

the seeming inertia of minerals, the group or simple consciousness of animals, the self-consciousness of humanity at large, the flowering of the greater consciousness in the world-men; and finally the first fruits of earth—divinely-conscious Man, the Son of God and Mother Earth. From that seeming inertia of the rock, to the more or less pure integration of spiritual consciousness which is Godhood, every step of the progress is a refining of matter to a heightened vibration—increased spiritual receptivity, increased capacity for inspiration.

Spirit, in itself, the emanation of God, is the universal driving force. For the integration of spirit into centralised systems—for the very identifying of its consciousness in separate beings—matrices of matter are required. This is the purpose of the union of God, the Father, and Earth, the Mother. All earth creatures are products of this union. The great constructive scheme of this union is the production of divine men, in whom spiritual force is no longer diffused and dependent upon matter, but integrated *through* matter, into conscious creative being. This is the Godhood of man.

Each spiritual consciousness is a growth of separate and individual history. Each has a thread of experience that runs from the beginning, from the very rock itself. This thread runs through the passage of self-consciousness, where

the climaxes of earth-experience are reached, and where self-mastery is won or lost. Not one of these threads of experience can ever be duplicated. According to it, is determined the quality of the individual's art or action. Since there will never be another like it, the decay and ruin of a human soul, in self-consciousness, is the only tragedy in the world.

A butterfly is crawling through the high June grass, dragging its weather-blackened cocoon. The sun is shining, but she is caught in the dewy shade. Her ancient shelter is bound about her vitals, locking the damp untried wings. Sunlight will dry her wings to slip forth; sunlight will dry and fold back the rent in the cocoon; sunlight will set her free. If she fails to reach the sunlight, her strength will pass, and the worms will find her there . . . trembling, untried wings, useless wings that blow softly among twigs and grasses, and the hungry denizens of the surface earth. . . . Yet, all the time the sun is shining.

Self-conscious man comes toward the spiritual sunlight—trailing his past, trailing his earthly house. These are burdens that answer only to the force of gravitation. Up to the time of his breaking forth from the ancient shelter of simple consciousness, his destiny was divinely planned. Now in the consciousness of a different light shin-

ing strangely upon his faculties, he must use his own strength and render his own decision. He has reached the crossing of the past and the future—the dramatic hour of all evolution. There is a universal suspense while he makes his choice. To emerge into the spiritual sunlight, he must cast off all incumbrance and appearance.

Self-conscious man stands listening, poised in the balance of time. His body feels the pull of the earth; his soul inclines to the lift of spiritual generation. Even in the tenement of flesh, he feels the warmth of that perfect radiance. Even through the windows of the flesh, he perceives his own, the Light. If he does not go forth into that light—consciously and in order—lo, he shall surely die. For this is the law. Achieving self-consciousness, he has fixed an identity. The return of that identity to earth is its destruction. He must go forth consciously and in order to the light of spiritual sun. Suddenly in that light, he shall feel the ecstasy of wings.

This is the great turning. Man drinks and thirsts again—until he turns to the Living Water. Man eats of the bread and perishes—until he turns to the Bread of Life. In self-consciousness, man has reached the time when the earth will not sustain him. The root to the ground; the flower to the sun. Man has flowered to the spiritual light, and the earth no longer contains the more

essential elements of his nourishment. This is the one truth of the world—all else is vain and trivial compared to it. And yet it is almost too simple to grasp—that henceforth man must listen and lean upon and look toward the spiritual force that drives the world, and not to the increment of this force, which matter is.

All arts, all inventions, all that glows in the world, all compassion, all beauty of service, is energised from the beginnings of spiritual consciousness—all that makes men loved and remembered and idealised.

Hell itself is the perfect system. Without it you cannot deliver over your developed will and mastered self to receive in turn the higher consciousness. You must descend into hell to bring back the consciousness of all that you passed through, and escaped, in order to earn an instantaneous and familiar sympathy with the world—the first and most important requisite of the world-man. Hell itself is right—the tragedy is to remain. The tragedy is to fail to see, in the midst of a thousand evidences, the horror and death of its illusions.

War, commercial madness, all the vanities of intellect, all appeals to fancied elects, all schools of art which for a day exploit their technicalities, all caste, class, slavery, all cults and departures, are but the detainers of self-consciousness. Men have identified themselves emotionally with all

these things, and been betrayed by them. The most flagrant illusion of them all is materialism. Without the idealist there could be no heaven. Man makes his heaven by his thoughts in the flesh. Peace and the amplitude, the beauty and the glory of spiritual consciousness, can only be claimed, pointed off and made perfect, by the man who has made the surveys of his country from the life in the flesh. The realist will find his own base materials, nothing more, a sufficient hell.

The return of man to the divine will with his treasures of individuality—that is the high way. Man, a living record of his own adventures, bound in flesh, high creation of earth, realising himself, and returning from his latest and greatest voyage of discovery, bringing his splendid gifts to the Master—that is the illumination of the world-man. . . . Caught in the illusions of the world, fighting to establish a separate mastery, betraying the Master who equipped him for the journey—that is the treachery and the tragedy of the soul.

The terrible secret of many a spiritual striver has been his inability to love something which he dare not conceive. He is told to love God. The stars are not God. He tries to send out his worship, between and beyond the stars, his mind torturing itself to fix the point of God. Many have wasted in this delusion. . . . I see from my

window the standing corn, rows of peas and beans in rich maturing, the mystery of decay in a pile of compost, dipping meadow-lands, the yellow floor of a fresh-cut oat-field with the tumbled shocks; I see the distant elms. If the door were open, I could see the bee-hives—most wonderful of all. For the bees take the present of the flowers and give them back their future.

Often the eyes sting with a sudden sense of the beauty and mystery of common things—that is the love of God in man's heart. Man may love the master-souls among men; thrill with love at the laughter of children; he may love the myriad evidences of God in the world. The view from the window, the saddle horse lifting his head to listen to the distant train—the whole glowing pastoral from this window—from any window—thrills with the spirit of God.

Does the old bee-keeper demand of the bees—*Love me?* They serve him best by loving one another. When all are at their highest best—they are raptly at work together. The old beekeeper will see them through the winter. . . . God loves the world through the souls of men. We receive the love of God—that is the in-breathing, that is the inspiration. The outpouring is service to men. We love God by loving our neighbour—that is the immortal formula. Presently we shall see the sons of God in the eyes of passing men.

On a certain morning, a man found an insect drama enacting at the edge of his garden. His eyes and brain were occupied in the drawing mystery of it, while his fuller, deeper faculties sank into a trance of contemplation. That was his hour. The very road to Damascus, it proved for him. There and then he realised: All life is One. . . . This sense of oneness is the beginning of the world-man's consciousness. This sense of oneness is the first deep breath of the soul; this is the in-breathing, the inspiration. Realising this, one regards the stranger with awe and tenderness, and with compassion he regards the deepest-down man. From this thrilling sense of the Fatherhood of God and the Motherhood of Earth—and only from this—can come the Brotherhood of Man.

Earth seen at a glance, moonlit on one side, sunlit on the other; trees and oceans, mountains, animals and men, all breathed upon by the great refining spirit of God; at a glance, the perception that the difference between the saint and the saurian is just in receptivity to spiritual vibration; the instant knowledge that earth is a far sweet garden of God, eternity its season, its fruits the spiritual sons of God—this is the illumination of the world-men.

After this first deep breath of the soul comes the gloom and the storm, for the awakened spiritual consciousness perceives that his brother

sleeps. The world-man goes forth to tell his story, to be crucified for his story, to die every day if need be. For the death of the body is as nothing, if through martyrdom, others may be brought to see. . . . The greater the service, the greater the replenishment; the greater the replenishment the greater the service again.

In-breathing and outpouring—that is the eternal plan. Everything is for the individual; and yet the law is so glorious, for it reads: You cannot achieve the larger consciousness of the individual, except that you live for others. . . . Just a little while, the peril of the Crossing. Quickly there comes the balance of spiritual power, by which the avoidance of evil becomes automatic and instinctive. The sense of well-being comes alone in service for others, the right hand of the soul's life. Through inspiration and service, the rhythm of world-manhood is attained, its vision and accomplishment. Apart from this rhythm, having once touched it, is a sense of moral illness that is insupportable.

Ahead on the road are the world-men. . . . The conscious, intensive cultivation of the human spirit is just beginning. Obedience to exterior voices is the way of falseness and disorder. The perfect beginning is the mastery of the self, its most obvious errors and perversions. First the mastery of the body; then to still the voice of the

brain, which in the world-man is not his creative centre, but the instrument of his creation—the receptive surface for his inspiration. Your brain is a babbling child; your soul is like a prophet walking in the garden. The prophet turns, enters your house with inspired face, bringing a message for you—for you alone. The continued whimpered nothings of the child distract the prophet's intention, and he departs without leaving the revelation. You must still the voice of the brain to hear the deeper, the unerring voice.

The lower self and all its deforming emotions are cleared from a man's work, when he realises that he is an instrument of the universal spiritual energy; that the eminent honour in life is that he has made himself fine enough to be used; that all fine work and high behaviour is a spiritual flowering through the physical man. He sees clearly that he contaminates his instrument, and the source of its power, when he seeks to identify himself in a worldly way with his art or behaviour.

First the animal man, then the self-man, then the world-man, finally the God-man—the perfect fruit of earth. These beings differ one from another in glory through their instrumentation of the spiritual consciousness—the varying heights of vibration with which they respond to the universal driving energy, which we have the temerity to call God. . . .

Bach, Beethoven and Brahms in their supreme moments of listening, heard a measure or two of the heavenly harmonies. That was their receiving. Most miserable of mortals would they have been, had they not been able to turn their gifts to men. They enfolded the harmonies (and this was their peculiar and inimitable service) in the substance of their technique, and made them permanent through the invention of the scale. Thus the harmonies were safely lowered to a vibration, to which the common ear is responsive. By listening again and again, we comprehend their majesty.

All creative thought is spiritually energised. The mind with its inimitable hosts of experience, momentarily vibrates to such a pitch that it strikes contact with a spiritual revelation. This is the high moment of genius. A single human interpretation of one of these spiritual facts has, for instance, altered and accelerated the traffic of the whole world. The highest moments of human genius in the past, are but suggestions of that which is to be the steady consciousness of the world-men of the future.

. . . That superb Son of Mary emerged from the simplicity of labour to a simplicity that was cosmic—and yet two millenniums afterward, we are just beginning to realise that He meant what He said. The socialists declare that He talked for them; in the fresh splendor of His simpleness, the

mystics (long and long they searched the arcana) are grasping all the dimensions of life. It is like coming home—like the green hills of home after a stormy passage—this walking forth of Jesus to meet us again—a world-man of surpassing simplicity, our exemplar and delight.

We hear the song-sparrow a thousand times. At last in some moment of our purer receptivity, we realise that this is one of Nature's angels saying: "The plan is good. The plan is good." . . . The sparrow was singing it all the time.

THE END

Noteworthy Critical Reception Accorded Will Levington Comfort's

DOWN AMONG MEN.

Outlook: Possessed of a marvellous descriptive genius, equipped with a remarkably flexible use of English, and impelled by the passion of a mystic,—the author of *Down Among Men* has written a striking novel. His picture of the Russian soldiers is epic in its quality.

Literary Digest: A book for real men and women—unusually powerful and thrilling. The book is bound to create discussion.

William Merton Payne in *The Dial:* Seems to us the most exalted and appealing story Mr. Comfort has thus far written. His picture of the struggle in the fields of millet—out of which was born Morning's great resolution—has the Tolstoyan handling. The scenes are set forth with a sense of beauty and power of conviction that are expressive of the author's terrible earnestness and deep sincerity.

The Argonaut: A purpose so strong as to amount almost to a passion, and so vivid as to give

his words a sort of rhythm that proceeds as much from feeling as from art. A novel of extraordinary power. It is as good as *Routledge Rides Alone*. It could hardly be better.

Atlantic Monthly: There is so much real fire in it—the fire of youth that has seen and suffered—so much vitality and passion that one grows chary of petty comments. About the author's conception there is never any lack of vividness. The writer offers us the cup of life, and there is blood in the cup.

Current Opinion: The Russian ploughman, a symbolic figure, steps out of Mr. Comfort's novel with arresting vividness. Here is a novelist worth watching.

Norma Bright Carson in *The Book News Monthly:* This is the story of the new man and the new woman—the greater Adam and the finer Eve. It is the tale of man's gift to men and woman's gift to man. It has all the sorrow of the world's sorrow, and the compassion of a Christ; it has the joy of a morning's sunrise after a night of horror and stress.

Hearst's Magazine: Will Levington Comfort is one of the few Americans who do big things in fiction like those which now and then come to

us from across the water. All of his work is written with distinction and with a spiritual dare that is contagious. In his poetic vault and vision he joins such masters as George Meredith and Maurice Hewlett.

Edwin L. Shuman in *Chicago Record-Herald:* An almost perfect tale of courage and adventure. In some respects a great novel; in all respects a novel above the ordinary, a novel to stir ideals, compel thought and provoke discussion.

Springfield Republican: One of the most interesting of our American novelists, Mr. Comfort is attempting even at the cost of ephemeral popularity, to strike a deeper note in his fiction and to make it pulsate with the larger and more vital emotions. He is most warmly to be praised.

Elia M. Peattie in *Chicago Tribune:* The book challenges attention. Contains some of the most remarkable scenes which have appeared in recent American fiction. There is clearly evidenced, too, that subtle and peculiar understanding of women which is comparable to that of William Sharpe in his Fiona Macleod personality.

Louise M. Field in *New York Times:* "It is one of the achievements of this twentieth century that our writers are beginning to see war, not as

'the tumult and the shouting,' nor even 'the Captains and the Kings,' but as the man in the ranks, and of this new visioning Mr. Comfort is one of the pioneers. Those who are familiar with this author's work will not need to be told how superbly he describes it all, until the whole culminates in the vivid, symbolic figure of that Ploughman who came out of the millet to his death. Serving men, loving them, and standing alone—this is the heart of the book. Yet there is more, very much more, in it; few richer novels than this of Mr. Comfort's have been published in many a long day."

B. K. in *Boston Evening Transcript:* "It is a duty and a pleasure to record the remarkable fact that in this book Mr. Comfort has corrected at a single stroke all the defects in the two previous books faithfully catalogued by this reviewer when they appeared. It is an astonishing feat, but it is something more. In meaning much for Mr. Comfort, this means much for us all . . . a new and unshackled Comfort."

"No better writing since Frank Norris has come to us than the first half of this book, dealing with the gifted but wayward boy who rides from the field of Liaoyang. . . . Where Norris loved to picture men in the grip of economic forces, Comfort likes to study them under the spell of a woman."

H. L. Mencken in *Smart Set:* A novelist I admire for his gift of fluent and luscious utterance. This Comfort, in fact, can write like the devil.

Edwin Markham in *N. Y. American:* Mr. Comfort's work is like the on-rush of summer in the high Sierras—a season's growth is crammed into a month's space. His man and woman are of the latest and finest spirits of our own era—the glowing nebulæ of this surging new time which is fusing the past and forging the future.

Mary Adams Stearns in *Chicago Evening Post:* The picture of the Russian ploughman for simple grandeur has never been surpassed.

Rev. Chas. F. Aked in *N. Y. American:* Mr. Comfort crystallises a world-movement in a single tragic incident. He sings the epic of the Ploughman.

Ida Gilbert Myers in the *Washington Star:* A great story. This is the epic of the woman mothering the world.

Peter Fagin in *Boston-Herald:* A story whose parts fit like a palace of the Incas.

N. P. D. in *New York Globe:* We can say with all sincerity that we know of no recent bit

of descriptive writing that can match this for sustained, breathless, dramatic interest.

Chicago Daily News: The single figure of the Russian Ploughman in tragedy, simplicity and strength, can only be compared to one of Millet's masterpieces.

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